

1 STATE OF MISSOURI
2 PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
3 TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
4
5 Public Hearing
6 May 29, 2007
7 University of Missouri - St. Louis
8 Millennium Student Center
9 St. Louis, Missouri
10 Volume 5
11
12 In the Matter of) Case No. GR-2007-0208, et al
13 Laclede Gas Company's)
14 Tariff to Revise)
15 Natural Gas Rate)
16 Schedules)
17
18 KENNARD L. JONES, Presiding
19 SENIOR REGULATORY LAW JUDGE
20 JEFF DAVIS, Chairman
21 CONNIE MURRAY,
22 ROBERT M. CLAYTON, III
23 COMMISSIONERS
24
25 REPORTED BY: Sheila Field, CCR No. 1226

1 APPEARANCES:

2

3 Laclede Gas Company:

4 Mr. Michael Pendergast

5 Mr. Richard Zucker

6 Mr. Kenneth Neises

7

8 Office of the Public Counsel:

9 Mr. Marc Poston

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11 Missouri Public Service Counsel Staff:

12 Lera Shemwell

13 Mark Oligschlaeger

14 Tom Solt

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PROCEEDINGS

JUDGE JONES: Good evening. I'd like to welcome you all to this hearing this evening. It's Tuesday, May 29th, 2007. The Missouri Public Service Commission has set this time for the public common hearing of Case No. GR-2007-0208 in which Laclede Gas Company seeks to implement a general rate increase for natural gas services in Missouri. I am Kennard Jones, a regulatory law judge that will preside over tonight's hearing. With me tonight to my right is Commissioner Connie Murray and to my left is Commissioner Robert Clayton.

Missouri Public Commission regulates the rates charged by investor owned utility companies in Missouri to ensure that those rates are just and reasonable. The Commission also regulates the quality of service and safety of the operations of those utilities.

This is an official hearing of the Missouri Public Service Commission. And the statements and testimony of witnesses will be recorded by a court reporter and must be given under oath or affirmation. Commissioners will have an opportunity to later read the transcript containing your testimony.

And as you all know, the purpose of this

1 hearing is to receive comments from you regarding this
2 rate increase. The company will not present witnesses
3 and will not answer questions while we are on the
4 record. The Commission and I are also not here to
5 answer questions, but rather to listen to your
6 comments. Your remarks here tonight will become part
7 of the official record of this case.

8 The Commission has several other public
9 comment hearings scheduled in St. Louis. If you
10 testify tonight, you do not need to testify again at
11 other hearings. If you would like to speak at other
12 hearings, you may be asked at those hearings to testify
13 after those who have not had the chance to speak.

14 I see some of you have signed up and when your
15 name is called, please step to the podium here at the
16 center of the room. I'll ask you to spell your name
17 for the court reporter so she can put it in the record
18 correctly and then you can make your statement.

19 There may be questions from the attorneys
20 present, from a commissioner or from myself. Please do
21 not leave the podium until you're excused. We will end
22 when everyone that desires to speak has had an
23 opportunity to do so.

24 In order to get as many of you on the record
25 as possible, we ask that you be brief. If a previous

1 speaker has already made a point you wanted to make,
2 you may simply state that you agree with what that
3 person said.

4 At this time, I'm going to take entries of
5 appearances from the attorneys present. Laclede Gas
6 Company.

7 MR. PENDERGAST: Thank you, your Honor.
8 Michael C. Pendergast and Richard E. Zucker appearing
9 on behalf of Laclede Gas Company. Our business
10 address is 720 Olive Street, St. Louis, Missouri
11 63101.

12 JUDGE JONES: From the staff of the Missouri
13 Public Service Commission.

14 MS. SHEMWELL: Good evening. Thank you, your
15 Honor. Lera Shemwell representing the staff of the
16 Missouri Public Service Commission, Post Office Box
17 360, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102.

18 JUDGE JONES: The Office of the Public
19 Counsel.

20 MR. POSTON: Thank you. Marc Poston,
21 attorney on behalf of the Office of the Public Counsel
22 and the Public. PO Box 2230 Jefferson City, Missouri
23 65101.

24 JUDGE JONES: Are there any other parties in
25 the case that are represented here tonight that are

1 not entered in appearance? I don't see any. And at
2 this time, we will go ahead and proceed to our list.
3 Now, it looks like there are approximately 12 people
4 here signed up. After I've gone through the list,
5 I'll ask if anyone else wants to speak. If we get to
6 about the hour and a half, two hour mark, we will take
7 a break, just so you know, for our court reporter, so
8 she can take a break and we can take a restroom break.
9 Then we will continue. That may not be necessary.
10 Let's go ahead and start the testimony.

11 I see Ricky/Rochelle Hopkins. Is that two
12 people or one person with two names?

13 MR. HOPKINS: It's two people.

14 JUDGE JONES: Okay. Do both of you want to
15 testify?

16 MR. HOPKINS: No, sir. Just me.

17 JUDGE JONES: And you are Ricky Hopkins?

18 MR. HOPKINS: Yes, sir.

19 JUDGE JONES: Please step to the podium.

20 RICKY HOPKINS,
21 after first being duly sworn to tell the truth
22 testifies as follows:

23 JUDGE JONES: And will you spell your first
24 and last name for the court reporter.

25 MR. HOPKINS: First name is Ricky, R-I-C-K-Y

1 and second name is Hopkins, H-O-P-K-I-N-S.

2 JUDGE JONES: Thank you, sir. And you may
3 give your testimony.

4 MR. HOPKINS: Okay. Actually, one of the
5 customers who came in had a comment about the AMR.
6 okay. I'm going to try to make this as brief as
7 possible. But she had a real valid point and I'm just
8 here to back her up. I've met nothing but nice and
9 hospitable people here this evening from the different
10 organizations, but that was quite the contrary from
11 the customer service, whose number you give us to call
12 when we have an issue with the company.

13 I mean, I had to call Laclede Gas for the
14 first time about three months ago. I had an issue with
15 a bill I received, a balloon bill, like what the other
16 customer was talking about, I don't know who, for about
17 500 bucks. And I called customer service number which
18 is downtown, I think on Olive. I guess, the only
19 number that a customer has to call. And I got a hold
20 of a guy and asked the guy what was the meaning of this
21 \$500 bill. I had never received a bill like that for
22 anything like that, except probably mortgage.

23 And I was asking him what was the reason, how
24 can this be and what is this and the other. Well, the
25 guy went on to explain, Mr. Hopkins, well you -- if you

1 look at your past bills, from over a year ago, you'll
2 see where most of your bills had a line, which stated
3 estimated.

4 Okay. So I'm looking at my -- I keep a couple
5 of bills around the house for reference in case
6 something goes wrong. And I said, yes, sir, I see
7 estimated here on a few of bills and I also see where a
8 few of those have on vacation and all of that and I say
9 what does all this mean to me, you know. Well,
10 estimated is what we know your bills are to be and
11 the -- and so we just took a guess -- a guess.

12 I said, sir, are you telling me that you just
13 -- you guessed -- I've been in this house six years and
14 you've been guessing the amount of gas I've been using.
15 I said how long has this been going on. Well, we see
16 here in November of 2004 we've estimated here that
17 you've been using like \$39 a month or whatever. I said
18 sir -- I said I understand that, but you're not
19 answering my question.

20 I said you mean to tell me that you've been
21 estimating my bill and I've been a resident here. Have
22 you tried to reach me to send out an expert, a meter
23 reader to rectify this. You mean to tell me that this
24 balloon bill that I'm getting is a result of your
25 negligence. You've got to be kidding me.

1 This is an investor owned company. I work for
2 one of the biggest investors in the world. Don't tell
3 me about investors.

4 I said you've got to be kidding me. I said
5 this is unfair and even if this was the case, as far as
6 this being an estimated bill from all these months
7 back, how come I, as the customer -- which Laclede Gas
8 has always known on to stress customer service and
9 satisfaction to the highest -- if that was the case,
10 how come I as a customer, wasn't informed about this
11 danger, or this matter before it got out of hand like
12 that. And as a matter of fact, who can I call, other
13 than you, since our rapport has been spoiled.

14 He -- he was quite the contrary of you guys.
15 You guys, hospitable, nice, polite, friendly. This
16 guy, I don't even want to tell you what he was. I'm
17 just going to leave it at that. But who do I call if I
18 can't get satisfaction from you. Well, sir, there's
19 nobody else. You can just that come down on Olive. I
20 said, well, who's down on Olive, other than you, I
21 don't want to talk to you. That has already failed.
22 Who do I talk to other than you? Well, there is no
23 body else. I said you've got to be kidding me. I
24 said, do you own the company. I said, do you have an
25 office manager. No, no. It's no -- it's just us.

1 So I went on the Internet to see if I could
2 get some luck there. It's just the same old 66-number
3 or some number down on Olive Street. You got to have
4 more than that, you know. You've got to invest in
5 customer satisfaction before you talk about a price
6 increase.

7 Everything has to coincide, you know. It's
8 like you're going to buy a car on a car lot. If I'm
9 not satisfied with you, I'm going to go on down the
10 road. But unfortunately, us here in Missouri, we don't
11 have that -- we don't have that luxury.

12 You've got to invest in your customer
13 satisfaction. Half of the problems that you-all
14 encounter can be solved over the phone if you have the
15 professional personnel to talk to your consumers and
16 educate them.

17 You send me an estimated bill for over a year,
18 who knows, if you get your bill in the mail and your
19 bill is within range -- oh, my bill's always this, so
20 I'm not going to worry. That goes for any utility or
21 any bill. If it's within range, you ain't going to
22 scan it with a magnifying glass every month. You're
23 not going to do it if it's within range.

24 I was trying to explain to the guy how can
25 this be, that's a rip-off, man. I can't come home to a

1 \$600 bill every month. What if you decide to rip me
2 off every month? Who can I call, other than you?
3 Well, there's nobody else. You've got to be kidding
4 me. You've got to be kidding me. There's got to be
5 somebody else you can call, some kind of third-party
6 mediation, some kind of intercompany office. There's
7 got to be somebody if I can't get it with you. That's
8 like a city without a police force.

9 JUDGE JONES: Thank you, Mr. Hopkins. At
10 this time, I want to start with Commissioner Murray.

11 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: Just a couple of
12 questions. When your bills were being estimated, you
13 said something about you hadn't been informed of the
14 problem. What was the problem that was keeping them
15 from reading your meter?

16 MR. HOPKINS: That's what he never told me.
17 My wife was sitting right there when I said -- I said
18 why do I get estimated bills in the first place when I
19 have a doorbell and a front door and a telephone.

20 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: Okay. And are your
21 bills being -- now that they've gone to automated
22 meter reading, I'm assuming that you're -- you're
23 getting bills that are no longer estimated; is that
24 correct?

25 MR. HOPKINS: Right, right.

1 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: And how long did you
2 get them, that they were estimated?

3 MR. HOPKINS: A year. And as a matter of
4 fact, I asked them why did you go back a year when my
5 automated meter reader was installed a couple of years
6 ago. He couldn't answer that. See there's nobody
7 else to run to.

8 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: Okay. So you're
9 telling us you never got satisfaction on that issue.

10 MR. HOPKINS: No. On anything. On nothing.

11 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: Thank you.

12 JUDGE JONES: Commissioner Clayton?

13 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Mr. Hopkins, you said
14 that you have resided at your house -- and what
15 community do you live in? What municipality?

16 MR. HOPKINS: Bellefontaine.

17 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Bellefontaine. Thank
18 you. You've been in your house for six years; is that
19 correct.

20 MR. HOPKINS: Yes, sir. Over six years, yes,
21 sir.

22 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: And when did you
23 receive the balloon bill?

24 MR. HOPKINS: I got the bill, I'd say
25 approximately three, four months ago.

1 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Three or four months
2 ago?

3 MR. HOPKINS: Yes, sir.

4 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: And so this year,
5 roughly, February or March, something like that?

6 MR. HOPKINS: Somewhere up in there, yes,
7 sir.

8 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: And how far back did
9 that bill go?

10 MR. HOPKINS: It went back a year.

11 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Just one year?

12 MR. HOPKINS: Yeah. Yes, sir.

13 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: And did they -- did
14 they advise -- did you have -- were there amounts that
15 were due, going back more than a year or did they say
16 or was there any discussion about that? Or was it
17 just one making up time for one year?

18 MR. HOPKINS: Right. It was -- right. It
19 was no past due balances on anything. Never been in
20 the red for anything. I always pay my bills. It was
21 just a -- he said --

22 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Well -- but I'm
23 talking about you said that they were estimating your
24 bills.

25 MR. HOPKINS: Right.

1 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Were there any
2 problems with estimates going back further than that?
3 I mean --

4 MR. HOPKINS: Not to my knowledge.

5 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Did they estimate it
6 the year before and --

7 MR. HOPKINS: No, sir.

8 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: No? Okay. And when
9 was the AMR devise installed on your property?

10 MR. HOPKINS: I'd say that was installed
11 maybe about -- I want to be correct -- maybe about
12 five -- probably about five months ago. So round up
13 in there.

14 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Were there any issues
15 with the installation? Any problems?

16 MR. HOPKINS: No. The guy just came right
17 downstairs, took him a few minutes to pop it in.

18 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Did they have a
19 problem calling you at that time?

20 MR. HOPKINS: No.

21 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Okay. And to the best
22 of your knowledge, have the bills been coming
23 accurately since then?

24 MR. HOPKINS: I've been keeping a close eye
25 on them so far.

1 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Yeah. And they've
2 been looking right so far?

3 MR. HOPKINS: So far.

4 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Okay. Okay.
5 Mr. Hopkins, thank you very much for your testimony.
6 I appreciate you coming.

7 JUDGE JONES: Are there any questions from
8 Laclede Gas?

9 MR. PENDERGAST: Sir, I just wanted to go
10 ahead and I don't have a specific question, but once
11 again, if we can go ahead and provide you with some
12 more satisfaction than what you've received so far,
13 I'd like to try to do that. So if you could talk to
14 us after this is over, we'll see what we can do.
15 Okay?

16 MR. HOPKINS: Sure.

17 MR. PENDERGAST: Thank you very much.

18 MR. HOPKINS: No problem.

19 JUDGE JONES: Questions from the staff of the
20 Office Public Counsel?

21 MR. POSTON: No, sir.

22 JUDGE JONES: Thank you, Mr. Hopkins. You
23 may be seated.

24 MR. HOPKINS: Thank you.

25 JUDGE JONES: The next is Mr. James Tuhill.

1 JAMES TUHILL,
2 after first being duly sworn to tell the truth
3 testifies as follows:
4 JUDGE JONES: Will you please state your
5 name.
6 MR. TUHILL: James Tuhill.
7 JUDGE JONES: And spell your name for the
8 court reporter.
9 MR. TUHILL: T-U-H-I-L-L.
10 JUDGE JONES: And you may proceed with your
11 testimony.
12 MR. TUHILL: Well, my testimony is about my
13 meter and my gas bills. But I do have something to
14 say. I'm sick to death of stockholders. They do
15 nothing but get fat and rich. And I will tell you a
16 joke if you want to hear it.
17 They had an auditor saying why they need this
18 present increase they're desiring.
19 There were three guys graduated from college.
20 They were all auditors from their graduation. And the
21 boss called them in and he asked the first one, how
22 much is two and two, he said four. He said I won't
23 hire you. He asked the second one, how much is two and
24 two, he said 22. I won't hire you. He asked the third
25 one, how much is two and two and he said whatever you

1 want it to be.

2 That's what auditors do. That's why they got
3 these auditors. They want a big boost.

4 But my real genuine complaint is about my gas
5 meter. I will not let them put one in there. I don't
6 want an automatic machine. I want a human being to
7 make a living, which they got rid of and that made them
8 really fat, because they had unions with benefits.
9 They had unions with retirement, Social Security. All
10 that is wiped out and they're sitting here saying they
11 need what, ten more billion or million?

12 So I was involved because I never need much
13 and suddenly they were hitting me with gas bills and
14 they were demanding that I let them in and put that
15 automatic meter reader on. I'm not going to let them
16 in. I will not have it.

17 So last year, they finally agreed, after a
18 couple of months of wrangling, they would send me these
19 things so I could read my own gas meter, which they
20 did. And last year, after the first time, I found out
21 I mailed in four of them on the date they requested,
22 but I didn't mail them in the day that I read them.
23 They were a day late when I mailed them in.

24 Then there was a sentence that said you have
25 to mail this in the day you read it by six o'clock p.m.

1 so it's postmarked on that day you read it. So this
2 year, I got some more. And I complied with them after
3 that. These, I have to bring them up to show them to
4 you. I did show them to that one gentleman, but I --

5 JUDGE JONES: Why don't you bring them up and
6 then step back to the podium and continue your
7 testimony.

8 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: You want those back,
9 don't you?

10 MR. TUHILL: Yes, I do. I'm reading them
11 every month. They do not wait for them.

12 JUDGE JONES: Do you need these for the
13 record while you're up there.

14 MR. TUHILL: No.

15 JUDGE JONES: Okay.

16 MR. TUHILL: If you read the cards, you'll
17 see that where the numbers are, there's only nine
18 there. So after the first four months -- and I don't
19 think I brought the bill to you, but after the first
20 four months, I was still getting estimated bills and
21 they even threatened to shut off my gas. So finally,
22 they sent me a card -- I brought it up with me -- and
23 on that card they sent me, you'll see that the eight
24 is on there. That's a ten digit number, but the cards
25 I got for every month are only nine so they couldn't

1 be accused of doing the wrong thing. But that's what
2 they did, they left that number off deliberately. And
3 this is my last gas bill I got and it's still
4 estimated, 105 bucks for the last month.

5 I don't use that much gas. My wife and I
6 raised six kids in that -- it's less than a thousand --
7 I mean, it's less than 800 square feet. We raised a
8 full family in that house and they're all adults and
9 they all got grandchildren and some of them have
10 great-grandchildren.

11 And I just think this is the old play for -- I
12 got money in the company, I should get more than
13 anybody that works for them. You ought to get rid of
14 that system.

15 JUDGE JONES: Thank you, sir.

16 MR. TUHILL: Can I have my cards back?

17 And Laclede Gas lets a lot of their employees
18 and other people buy stock. But they were using the
19 gas too. That ain't bad. It's the people that just
20 own it and don't use it. Because they go off every
21 winter to where they don't need gas heat.

22 JUDGE JONES: Mr. Tuhill, if you'll remain at
23 the podium for a moment, please.

24 MR. TUHILL: Are you going to hang me?

25 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: No, Mr. Tuhill. I

1 just wanted to thank you for coming out today. Most
2 of the people aren't aware, I got here earlier --
3 early this evening. Mr. Tuhill was the first one here
4 and I think he took public transportation to get here.

5 MR. TUHILL: Yes, I did.

6 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: I appreciate the extra
7 effort which you took to get here and you've been
8 sitting here for an hour and a half before everyone
9 else. So --

10 MR. TUHILL: It's not something to be
11 thankful for. It's not an effort. I just don't want
12 to give the gas company's any more goddamned money.

13 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Well, we want to thank
14 you for not sugarcoating how you feel. At least, I
15 don't think you're sugarcoating. If you weren't
16 sugarcoating -- frankly, you've been showing a great
17 amount of restraint, compared to what I heard earlier
18 today.

19 MR. TUHILL: Well, I can't accuse these three
20 gentlemen, because they're probably stockholders. Or
21 him, he's working for a living. I'd like to talk to
22 the people that own the world and put an end to that.

23 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Well, maybe these
24 folks can give you some home phone numbers and you can
25 call them direct. But thank you very much for coming.

1 JUDGE JONES: Next we'll hear from Robert and
2 Georgia O'Donnell. Will both of you be testifying?
3 Well, if both of you are testifying, we'll take one at
4 a time. Do you-all want to come up here together?
5 You can stand together, but you can't talk at the same
6 time because the court reporter has to be able to take
7 down what you're saying.

8 ROBERT and GEORGIA O'DONNELL,
9 after first being duly sworn to tell the truth
10 testifies as follows:

11 MS. O'DONNELL: My main complaint is the --
12 the bills seem so much higher this year than last
13 year. We were gone half the month of March and we had
14 a bill for like \$164. And all the neighbors were
15 there the entire month and their bill was less than
16 ours. Ours was higher. We had our thermostat set
17 below 60 and then the two weeks we were there was on
18 70. We never turn it above 70.

19 Now, we have a new furnace, just a year and a
20 half old. And we have new windows. We just got them
21 recently. We felt that would help, but the bill seems
22 to be higher than ever. And that's what I don't
23 understand. One bill was like 252. We've never had a
24 bill like that before so I don't know what we can do.
25 We can't keep the thermostat much lower when we're

1 there, because we'll freeze, but that's all I have.
2 I'm just wondering why it's so much higher this year
3 and then they want a raise, so that doesn't sound good.

4 JUDGE JONES: Okay. Thank you,
5 Ms. O'Donnell. Will you remain at the podium for a
6 moment please.

7 MR. O'DONNELL: My name is
8 Robert O'Donnell --

9 JUDGE JONES: Just a moment. I'm going to
10 take questions of Mrs. O'Donnell. Commissioner
11 Murray?

12 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: Mrs. O'Donnell, have
13 you talked to anyone at the company for an explanation
14 of your bills?

15 MS. O'DONNELL: I did call someone and she
16 said, well, it seems to be correct. It seems like if
17 they put in a meter, it always is higher, but I just
18 talked to the one person.

19 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: And you did ask that
20 it --

21 MS. O'DONNELL: Yeah. I don't know that they
22 came out and checked it or not. I'm not really sure
23 about that, but the day kind of went on and got busy
24 and -- but it did seem too high to everyone, you know,
25 because it was higher than everybody else's.

1 It's an all brick home. I don't know if that
2 makes a difference.

3 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: Thank you.

4 JUDGE JONES: Commissioner Clayton, do you
5 have questions?

6 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: If Mr. O'Donnell has
7 something to say, I may wait and -- while I've got
8 them both in the hot seat, if that's all right. If
9 you had something to add.

10 MR. O'DONNELL: My wife seemed to hit it
11 right on the head. She brought your gas bills right
12 up here so you could read it, if you care to read it.
13 You probably had your records down there, I assume, is
14 that not true?

15 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: We don't keep the
16 records of Laclede in Jefferson City, but Laclede has
17 those records. We require them to keep them.

18 MR. O'DONNELL: You gentlemen are not from
19 Laclede?

20 JUDGE JONES: No.

21 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: But you're in the
22 right place. May I ask the questions?

23 MR. O'DONNELL: The gentleman before us
24 seemed to hit it right on the head. He seemed to have
25 quite a few problems that I've seen. That's all I had

1 to say.

2 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Mr. and
3 Mrs. O'Donnell, may I ask just a couple of questions?
4 Did you compare your gas usage? Did you -- did you
5 look at any of the other numbers, other than just the
6 dollar amount that was due? Because if your usage
7 didn't go down, then there sounds like there's a
8 problem. There are changes in price, but did you have
9 somebody look at how much gas you used between March
10 of 2006 and March of 2007? And if you brought that
11 stuff with you, we do have staff that can help you go
12 through that material here today, if you have time.

13 MS. O'DONNELL: Okay. How long will that
14 take? We can't stay too long, but --

15 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Well, if -- you can
16 just go -- Marilyn, can you raise your hand? She's
17 right in the back. If you have that information, they
18 can go through that and perhaps find an explanation
19 for you. Doesn't sound like you've been looking at
20 all the numbers and I think that's important to make
21 sure that you at least have some satisfaction that the
22 bill is accurate.

23 MS. O'DONNELL: Okay. So we just talk to
24 Marilyn then?

25 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: I would suggest that

1 you do that. I don't think I have any other
2 questions. I was going to ask you some other numbers
3 on your bill, but it would probably be more efficient
4 if you talked to Marilyn.

5 JUDGE JONES: Do you have questions from
6 Laclede?

7 MR. PENDERGAST: Your Honor, I didn't have a
8 question, I just wanted to tell them we also have
9 people in the back, if you could raise your hand. If
10 you'd like to talk to them one of the things we can do
11 is send a high bill inspector. He'll take a look at
12 your equipment, he'll take a look at your lines and
13 take a look at your meter. And he'll see if he can
14 come up with any explanation as to why it seems to be
15 so high. If you'd like us to do that, let us know.

16 MS. O'DONNELL: Okay.

17 MR. PENDERGAST: Thank you.

18 MS. O'DONNELL: Thank you.

19 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Thank you all very
20 much for coming.

21 JUDGE JONES: Next we have, I believe, it's
22 T. Patterson.

23 THOMAS PATTERSON,
24 after first being duly sworn to tell the truth
25 testifies as follows:

1 JUDGE JONES: Okay. Will you please state
2 and spell your name for the court reporter.

3 MR. PATTERSON: Yeah. Patterson, it's
4 American, P-A-T-T-E-R-S-O-N, I was born in America,
5 you know what I'm saying. They -- I own stock in
6 about 10 or 12 different utility companies in the
7 United States and I get the reports and I do read
8 them. And it's every one that I get lately,
9 everybody's trying to economize. They're cutting
10 personnel, they're cutting trucks, they're looking for
11 efficiency, etc. etc. Okay.

12 And I've brought -- I just got this one a
13 couple of days ago from Texas Utility from Texas,
14 Dallas, Texas. I read a copy of their report and what
15 was interesting was that they had trouble with people
16 answering the telephone which is a major problem in St.
17 Louis. Nobody likes to answer the telephone. Anyway,
18 they finally got -- they were running 20 minutes per
19 call up until a few months ago. Now, they got it down
20 to 11 seconds, 11 seconds to answer the phone, the
21 utility company. And they're going and bringing in the
22 gas from Russia, Mexico, and South America, liquid gas.
23 I've run copies here if you want to read them.

24 And I own stock in Great Plains in Kansas
25 City and they're economizing. I own stock in PT & E, I

1 own stock in Edison, I own stock in San Antonio Gas and
2 Electric, I own stock in Florida Power. All of them
3 are trying to economize, but not Missouri. I went down
4 to your main office a couple of years ago because
5 everything was quite a bit higher than what it used to
6 be. That was an exercise in futility and it was kind
7 of funny because as I was walking out of the building,
8 there was some gentleman that said, man, he said, I
9 just got hit with a \$400 and some bill and I said,
10 well, welcome to the club. You're in St. Louis.
11 Nobody thinks in terms of the economy in St. Louis,
12 buses, trains, anything. And he said, yeah, but I'm
13 mayor of the city. I guess politicians don't get any
14 breaks when it comes to gas.

15 During the last electrical storms, I stayed in
16 my house and toughed it out. I put on ten blankets so
17 I could survive. I'm an old man, ex-soldier. And they
18 kept saying check your -- check your computer. Well,
19 no electricity and no TV, no -- and I said, I asked a
20 friend of mine, I said is there any way I can bypass my
21 gas system so I can get some heat in the house. He
22 said, no, it's electric setting. That was four times
23 in the last year. That's even in the summer time.

24 But anyway, the St. Louis, the gas company and
25 electric company in St. Louis is in trouble

1 economically. People are leaving, people are losing
2 their jobs, people are getting out of work. I just
3 heard a report a couple of days ago, there's 6,000
4 homes in or around St. Louis in foreclosure. There's
5 300 houses on the market and once the taxes hit, I can
6 guarantee you that half of St. Louis will be up for,
7 you know, will make the decision to leave in the next
8 few months.

9 Anyway, just every time I turn around -- I had
10 the old meter that came with the house. It's in the
11 basement. The house was built in '41, 1941. And so
12 the gas company says, well you need a new meter. So I
13 worked out the deal for the new meter and then the gas
14 company came in and said, no, no, you've got to get one
15 of those electronic deals. So I waited around four
16 hours, like I don't have anything else to do but wait
17 around four hours for the gas company to show up.

18 I talked to the gas company man. He was
19 sitting in his truck with the engine running. I said,
20 don't you have any economy in your gas company with the
21 engine running. He said, hey, this is my truck,
22 Laclede Gas' I guess they have a super deal with the
23 gas company's, they don't have to pay the prices we do.

24 So -- and anyway, I told the guy that came in,
25 I said, I've got a dog, please tell me when you come,

1 please don't leave the door open. So he left the
2 damned door open and the dog ran out of the house, a
3 very expensive dog. And fortunately, he chased it for
4 six to eight blocks. He finally got it, he's black so
5 you can't see it. He went to a lot of trouble to get
6 the dog. So he got the dog back and we got the door
7 closed, got the garage door closed.

8 And then finally -- I think it's Honeywell --
9 I think Honeywell is the part, whatever it is, this
10 little plastic thing you put on there. So the guy says
11 once a year we've got to, under Missouri law, we've got
12 to check the things. So -- so I waited another four
13 hours and finally this guy came up with this little pin
14 or whatever it was and it took him four hours to get
15 there and he said I'm here to check it so he comes in
16 to check it. He says, by the way, he says, what's the
17 address here. I said, well, isn't that part of the
18 program that when you check gas meters, you're supposed
19 to know which house and address. I mean, I said one
20 thing about St. Louis, they put the address on the
21 front door, isn't that amazing. That's pretty amazing
22 that the address is right here. That's kind of nice.

23 And these guys are supersharp and if you call
24 the gas company here in St. Louis, you get push one if
25 you want this room, push two if you want upstairs, push

1 three if you want the bathroom, push four if you want
2 the janitor, push five if -- you know.

3 So why do people get mad at the gas company
4 any more than any other company? Because I pay more
5 for gas bills on this house than any other property
6 than I own. That's true with taxes. That's true with
7 electricity.

8 And the wonderful electric company -- anyway I
9 get these things, I ran some copies here and it's kind
10 of interesting that the electric companies are trying
11 to economize, it's really amazing. Getting economy
12 cars and getting rid of all their deadweight personnel,
13 which St. Louis has a lot of and so I'm -- but there's
14 nobody to talk to.

15 You know, if you don't want to call and you go
16 to the office, there's a \$10 parking down there and
17 wait two hours and if you're lucky, you get somebody
18 that speaks English and anyway that's about all I have.
19 If you want copies of this, you can throw it away or
20 whatever.

21 JUDGE JONES: Could you remain at the podium,
22 sir?

23 (Chairman Davis enters.)

24 JUDGE JONES: Are there any questions from
25 Laclede?

1 MR. PENDERGAST: I have no questions. Thank
2 you, sir.

3 JUDGE JONES: Staff?

4 MR. POSTON: No questions.

5 JUDGE JONES: And Chairman Jeff Davis has
6 just joined us. Just so you-all know who has joined
7 us at this table. Next we move to David Richardson.

8 DAVID RICHARDSON,
9 after first being duly sworn to tell the truth
10 testifies as follows:

11 JUDGE JONES: Thank you. And will you please
12 state and spell your name for the court reporter.

13 MR. RICHARDSON: The name, the first name is
14 David, D-A-V-I-D, last name is Richardson,
15 R-I-C-H-A-R-D-S-O-N.

16 JUDGE JONES: Thank you. You may proceed.

17 MR. RICHARDSON: Okay. My problems are
18 basically the same as the first gentleman with a few
19 exceptions, with a couple of exceptions. My bills was
20 not being estimated, but after the electronic device
21 was put in, my bill doubled and it went from like --
22 for example, \$200 to \$400. And I did not follow with
23 Laclede Gas. What I started to do -- what I started
24 doing was keeping track of the usage myself so I could
25 see what was going on. And the usage was about the

1 same, but the price doubled.

2 I also turned the thermostat down, got an
3 efficiency, got storm windows. So I don't have an
4 explanation for the amount. And I said the usage was
5 about the same, the usage -- the usage was also
6 different after they put the meter in. And I have the
7 report that I generated.

8 JUDGE JONES: Thank you, sir. Could you
9 remain at the podium. Commissioner Murray?

10 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: Did you say you had
11 your bills with you?

12 MR. RICHARDSON: No, I don't have the bills.
13 What I did -- I'm an associate pastor -- what I did
14 was I took the information from the bills and recorded
15 it in a data base and then started producing reports.
16 And I wanted to go back all the way to -- for the last
17 five years. I have not completed that process, but I
18 do have 2006, five, and four.

19 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: Okay. I suggest that
20 perhaps you may talk to one of the staff people or the
21 individuals from Laclede that are here this evening.

22 MR. RICHARDSON: Yeah. The gentleman spoke
23 to me earlier and said that I should see two gentlemen
24 back there.

25 JUDGE JONES: Commissioner Clayton?

1 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: I just -- I wanted to
2 be clear. I heard two different things so I want to
3 make sure it's right. The first time you said that
4 after installation of the AMR, your usage stayed the
5 same and then you --

6 MR. RICHARDSON: No. I was incorrect on
7 that. The usage and the cost went up.

8 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: When was the AMR
9 installed?

10 MR. RICHARDSON: Honestly, I don't know for
11 sure. I'm not -- sometime within 2006, before the
12 winter.

13 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: So last year?

14 MR. RICHARDSON: Yes. It was last year.

15 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Before winter of last
16 year or the summer?

17 MR. RICHARDSON: It was November or October
18 or somewhere in there.

19 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Okay. Fall of '06?

20 MR. RICHARDSON: Right. Because what
21 happened was the previous year, the bill was maybe
22 \$165 and then the next month it was -- I mean, in
23 2004, it was like \$265, for example. Then the next
24 time it was like \$400. So then what I did, I knew
25 they were putting the meters in and I did not know it

1 had been installed, so what I did, I went outside and
2 I looked and I could see the AMR on it.

3 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: When did you start --
4 you didn't start checking the usage yourself until
5 after the AMR then?

6 MR. RICHARDSON: That is correct. Because
7 the bill was reasonable, you know, it was -- in the
8 winter, it was \$200 or \$205 and then all of a sudden,
9 it goes from \$200 to \$400, then you kind of pay
10 attention to that.

11 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: And on that bill, was
12 the usage different or was the usage the same?

13 MR. RICHARDSON: The usage was about --
14 that's where the usage was about the same.

15 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Okay. So that was
16 just the commodity price of gas had gone up.

17 MR. RICHARDSON: Yeah, but -- it could be.
18 You see, that's what I don't know and I didn't really
19 -- I did not follow with Laclede Gas.

20 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Yeah. Double sounds
21 like an awful lot. I would encourage you -- I agree
22 with Commissioner Murray. Speak with someone from
23 Laclede and if Mr. Pendergast could identify them and
24 also we have staff here. One of our Public Service
25 Commission staff could help you also. If you've got

1 those records, that information will be very helpful.
2 I can't say -- I think you're the first person I've
3 heard come in and say I've got records from '04, '05,
4 '06, and '07. That's a lot of records that should
5 provide some answers to your questions. Thank you
6 very much for coming.

7 MR. RICHARDSON: Okay.

8 JUDGE JONES: We will now here from
9 Dexine Gibson.

10 DEXINE GIBSON,
11 after first being duly sworn to tell the truth
12 testifies as follows:

13 JUDGE JONES: Thank you. Will you please
14 state and spell your name for the court reporter.

15 MS. GIBSON: Dexine Gibson, D-E-X-I-N-E
16 G-I-B-S-O-N.

17 JUDGE JONES: Thank you. You may go ahead
18 and testify.

19 MS. GIBSON: Okay. I'm -- first of all, I'm
20 an ACORN member and I have a petition that I would
21 like to leave with you from the last meeting and
22 today. It's about 68 people that have signed this,
23 opposed to the rate hike.

24 JUDGE JONES: Did you make copies of that or
25 do you just have the one?

1 MS. GIBSON: I have a copy.

2 JUDGE JONES: Okay.

3 MS. GIBSON: You can have this.

4 JUDGE JONES: You can go ahead and hand it

5 here. We'll go ahead and mark that as Exhibit 1.

6 Mr. Pendergast, any objection?

7 MR. PENDERGAST: No objection, your Honor.

8 (WHEREIN, Exhibit 1 was marked for

9 identification by the Court Reporter.)

10 JUDGE JONES: Okay. Exhibit 1 will be

11 admitted to the hearing. You can go ahead and

12 testify.

13 MS. GIBSON: Okay. Another reason why I'm

14 here today is last week, I was at the meeting, but I

15 didn't get a chance to speak and since then, on

16 Saturday, I received a gas bill. My original bill

17 usage amount of the bill was \$48. I looked on the

18 back side of the bill and it said for me to pay a

19 budget of \$191. So that kind of upset me.

20 So I called Laclede Gas on Saturday and I

21 spoke to someone in customer service and I asked them,

22 I said well, my bill is \$48. I can pay it today and it

23 will be zero. Why do I have a budget for \$191 and why

24 would I want to send you \$191 all through the summer,

25 this month from -- until December? Because I never

1 turn my gas on until after Thanksgiving. And so I'm
2 asking them why would I want to give you -- just give
3 you \$200 a month and I'm not using any gas.

4 So he said from my previous usage of last year
5 and because HDC had to help me with my gas bill, but I
6 told them I didn't want a budget and I was no longer on
7 a budget.

8 He told me if I didn't get on a budget, that
9 HDC, which is the Human Development Center, would never
10 help me again. I said that's not true. The only
11 reason why they don't help you is if you've stolen gas
12 or something for some reason, but for me to -- my bill
13 to be clear and I pay the \$48 and don't owe anything.

14 I told him I'm not sending you \$200 a month
15 because in August, my lease is up and I'm moving. So
16 who's to say that I might move into an efficiency or
17 into an all electric unit or something or who's to say
18 I'm even going to be living in December. Why should I
19 send them my money? And he said because this is the
20 usage that you've used in the past.

21 But my bill is clear, is zero. If I had an
22 outstanding bill, I wouldn't mind paying it, like last
23 year, I had an outstanding gas bill and I was on the
24 budget from the year before. I paid -- was paying the
25 budget, which was \$200 a month, because I couldn't get

1 my bill down fast enough and I didn't have extra money
2 to send them along with the budget, then they put a
3 deposit on my bill. So that raised my budget bill from
4 200 a month to \$325 a month. And see, I could barely
5 pay the budget, but I never missed paying it. But it
6 already had an outstanding gas bill.

7 I couldn't understand why would you add a \$500
8 deposit onto someone's bill that's already on a budget.
9 I'm on budget billing. And I just, you know, couldn't
10 understand it. And then I want to know when I move in
11 August, do I get my deposit money back when I move into
12 another residence or how does that go or do I just give
13 them my \$500 and that's that?

14 JUDGE JONES: Mr. Chairman, any questions?

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ma'am, this is just a
16 general question. I don't -- I don't -- first of all,
17 I guess I don't know -- I would assume that if you
18 move, and you disconnect service, if you have a
19 credit, then you're entitled to get it back.
20 Certainly, whenever the time you terminate that
21 service would be and we've got some people in the back
22 there that can help you answer that question, probably
23 a little bit more thoroughly.

24 My question for you, as a representative of
25 ACORN, is are you hearing from people who have lost or

1 are concerned about losing assistance from St. Louis
2 HDC because of the minimum wage increase that went into
3 effect in January?

4 MS. GIBSON: Well, I talked to a few people
5 that are concerned about that issue.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So are you -- because
7 they're basically being, you know, bumped up above the
8 75 or 100 or 125 percent poverty threshold?

9 MS. GIBSON: Right.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Yeah. So is that a
11 problem that we need to be taking a closer look at?

12 MS. GIBSON: Yes. I mean because the rate
13 increase went up, so now they want that, you know, you
14 get a little more money, so you don't get any help
15 from over here so basically, we're not winning for
16 losing, even though we did get added money. Now, we
17 can't get any help because we got what, two dollars or
18 a dollar and some change more. So we're still losing
19 out.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you, ma'am. no further
21 questions.

22 JUDGE JONES: Commissioner Clayton?

23 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Ms. Gibson, I'm
24 confused. I started writing stuff down. I want to
25 make sure I'm clear in how I wrote it down. You said

1 that recently they -- the company advised that you had
2 to go on budget billing at 191 a month?

3 MS. GIBSON: Yes.

4 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: And when did that
5 occur?

6 MS. GIBSON: Saturday. This past Saturday.

7 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: So this Saturday you
8 received your gas bill?

9 MS. GIBSON: Uh-huh. I have it with me.

10 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Okay. And were you on
11 budget billing last year?

12 MS. GIBSON: Yes.

13 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: And what was the
14 amount of budget billing last year that you said you
15 had?

16 MS. GIBSON: It's \$200 a month and because I
17 couldn't get my bill down fast enough for Laclede Gas,
18 they added a deposit on there. They also sent me a
19 letter saying that they're going to turn my name over
20 to the creditors because I couldn't clear my gas bill
21 up.

22 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: What was the deposit
23 amount?

24 MS. GIBSON: The deposit amount was \$500.

25 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Holy Mackerel. And

1 when did -- when was that deposit amount -- when did
2 you receive that bill?

3 MS. GIBSON: I received that bill in May
4 because I paid it June, July, and August.

5 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Not this May?

6 MS. GIBSON: No. Last year. Yeah, \$325 a
7 month for June, July, and August, the hottest months
8 of the year.

9 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: What was that \$48
10 amount bill that you were talking about?

11 MS. GIBSON: That's my bill from last month
12 that I've, you know, that I need to pay right now.

13 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Okay. Okay. Have you
14 spoken with the -- is it MDC people about whether you
15 have to go on budget billing?

16 MS. GIBSON: Yes. I spoke with HDC.

17 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Is it HDC?

18 MS. GIBSON: Yes.

19 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: We've got too many
20 acronyms in this business. And did they -- did they
21 advise you that you had to go on budget billing to
22 participate in the program?

23 MS. GIBSON: The only way that I had to go on
24 budget billing with HDC, if I had an enormous bill,
25 then I had to go on a budget to get my bill down with

1 a budget, but when your bill is zero, you can come off
2 the budget. So I've been off the budget.

3 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: So the information you
4 got from HDC was different than what the company told
5 you?

6 MS. GIBSON: Yes.

7 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Okay. Okay. I don't
8 think I have any other questions. Thank you very
9 much.

10 JUDGE JONES: Any questions from Laclede?

11 MR. PENDERGAST: Yes, ma'am. If I could.
12 You indicated you were assessed a deposit. Have you
13 -- did you pay that deposit?

14 MS. GIBSON: Yes. Yes.

15 MR. PENDERGAST: You did. Okay. And that
16 had been paid at the time you were told on Saturday?

17 MS. GIBSON: No. I paid the deposit last
18 year, June, July, and August, \$500 they added to my
19 bill.

20 MR. PENDERGAST: Okay. And then you had a
21 balance of only \$48. And you were willing to pay the
22 \$48 but you were told that you needed to go on a
23 budget bill?

24 MS. GIBSON: No. The only reason why I
25 didn't pay the \$48 yet is because I brought my bill

1 with me in case someone wanted to see it. But I told
2 them -- I told them I would pay the \$48. They said
3 that I needed to pay the \$191 for a budget. They told
4 me, don't even worry about the \$48 because my budget
5 is \$191. If I paid just the \$48, then I would start
6 receiving disconnection notices.

7 MR. PENDERGAST: Okay. But you only owe \$48?

8 MS. GIBSON: That's all I owe.

9 MR. PENDERGAST: That's all you have, as far
10 as balance and that's with the deposit already being
11 paid?

12 MS. GIBSON: Yes.

13 MR. PENDERGAST: Okay. Well, that sounds a
14 little odd to me so I think we ought to go ahead and
15 try to get you an explanation for what's going on. If
16 you would go ahead and see us afterwards so we can see
17 if we can get this straightened out, I sure would
18 appreciate it. Thank you.

19 MS. GIBSON: Okay.

20 JUDGE JONES: Any questions from staff of the
21 Office of Public Counsel?

22 MR. POSTON: No questions.

23 JUDGE JONES: Thank you, ma'am. You may step
24 down.

25 MS. GIBSON: Thank you.

1 JUDGE JONES: We will now hear from
2 Ms. Mary Ewing.

3 MARY EWING,
4 after first being duly sworn to tell the truth
5 testifies as follows:

6 JUDGE JONES: Thank you. And will you please
7 state and spell your name for the court reporter.

8 MS. EWING: My name is Mary Ewing, M-A-R-Y
9 E-W-I-N-G.

10 JUDGE JONES: Thank you, ma'am. You may
11 proceed.

12 MS. EWING: Okay. I just want to say I
13 wanted someone to come out and do one of their
14 estimated bills on my gas. And I want them to do what
15 he said that they can do, like the service to come out
16 and see if there was any faultiness on the behalf of
17 Laclede Gas. I did notice an increase when the meter
18 went in, but that meter's on the outside. So I don't
19 know if it's supposed to be on the outside. That
20 meter's supposed to be on the outside?

21 MR. PENDERGAST: Most meters are on the
22 outside.

23 MS. EWING: Okay. Then I want someone to
24 come out and show me how to increase -- how I got this
25 bill. My gas is off too. So most of the reason why

1 my gas is off is I couldn't afford to pay the bill
2 because the bill is like 249 a month.

3 And I'm not on the budget billing or anything,
4 but I do have a deposit and I'm trying to figure out,
5 will a deposit be assessed to the bill every year.
6 That's what I should have said in my thing earlier, but
7 I just want somebody to come out from Laclede and just
8 to check everything out and see if I have a problem
9 with why my gas bill is up or if it's just the
10 increase. That's all.

11 JUDGE JONES: Okay. Any -- Mr. Chairman, do
12 you have a question?

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I don't have anything.

14 JUDGE JONES: Commissioner Murray?

15 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: No questions.

16 JUDGE JONES: Commissioner Clayton?

17 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Your catering gig got
18 over early, huh?

19 MS. EWING: Yeah.

20 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Ms. Ewing was here
21 early today too. Ms. Ewing, this is a perfect
22 opportunity to ask these questions and I'd like to --
23 you need to know who the Laclede folks are. You can
24 get some of those questions answered today. If we
25 could get them to identify themselves and also we have

1 staff here. Ms. Shemwell, if you could just see that
2 someone speaks with her and the questions that you
3 have, those could be answered today. So thank you
4 very much for coming.

5 MS. EWING: Thank you, sir.

6 MR. PENDERGAST: Yes. Ms. Ewing, if you
7 would, the gentleman in the black shirt back there
8 should be able to help you out. Thank you very much.

9 JUDGE JONES: Thank you. Next, we'll hear
10 from Patricia Belcarist.

11 PATRICIA BELCARIST,
12 after first being duly sworn to tell the truth
13 testifies as follows:

14 JUDGE JONES: Could you please state and
15 spell your name for the court reporter.

16 MS. BELCARIST: Patricia, P-A-T-R-I-C-I-A,
17 Belcarist B-E-L-C-A-R-I-S-T.

18 JUDGE JONES: Thank you, ma'am. You may
19 proceed.

20 MS. BELCARIST: Okay. My concern is similar
21 along with some of the other ones, but mine is because
22 I have not turned my furnace on because I'm having
23 some repairs done on my house. So I'm in and out of
24 the house and I haven't used my furnace at all in the
25 last two years. So last year my bill was up a little

1 bit because of when they did the service to turn the
2 gas on, but this year, I didn't have to have any
3 drywall and I needed to have it on. So my bill was,
4 oh, I guess, about \$85, I don't remember exactly, I
5 don't have it with me.

6 But when I called to ask why my bill was so
7 high, she said it was because of the weather and
8 because it was cold. I said, but the only thing I'm
9 using is hot water. That's all I'm using here. And
10 she said, well, because the weather was cold, then your
11 bill was higher. So I'm just concerned.

12 And I haven't had the meter installed because
13 initially when I tried to have it installed, Laclede
14 Gas did not show up. I didn't get a call, a message,
15 or anything and when I rescheduled, I was not able to
16 keep the appointment, so I didn't have it installed.
17 And I have a letter that I received saying that it was
18 a violation of the law for me not to have the meter
19 installed. And if I didn't, then they would be forced
20 to turn my gas off.

21 And initially, I wanted them to hurry up and
22 get it turned off -- I mean to get it installed -- but
23 when they said that if I have it turned off, then I
24 could pay, I think \$30-something dollars and have it
25 turned back on and to avoid the cost. And when I

1 started adding up, I thought it might even be cheaper
2 for me to have it turned off and just list -- and I
3 even found out I could even get it inspected and looked
4 over.

5 But my concern is the bill. It's just higher
6 and it's -- the last year and I'm not even -- the only
7 thing I'm using is the hot water. So I just need to
8 know what needs to be done and how can I get a more
9 realistic bill, based on the hot water usage that I'm
10 using and not the furnace.

11 JUDGE JONES: Chairman Davis, do you have any
12 questions?

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: No questions.

14 JUDGE JONES: Commissioner Murray?

15 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: No questions.

16 JUDGE JONES: Commissioner Clayton.

17 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Ms. Belcarist?

18 MS. BELCARIST: That's right.

19 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Did I pronounce it
20 right?

21 MS. BELCARIST: Uh-huh.

22 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: You only have -- how
23 do you heat your home? Do you have electric?

24 MS. BELCARIST: Yeah, right. I'm in and out
25 on a regular basis. So I have several electric

1 heaters. I might confine myself in the bathroom or --

2 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Confine yourself in
3 the bathroom? You're going to say that on the record?

4 MS. BELCARIST: Oh, I'm sorry.

5 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: That's all right.
6 That's all right. So you have other ways of heating
7 your house?

8 MS. BELCARIST: Right. Basically electric.

9 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Okay. And --

10 MS. BELCARIST: I got rid of my stove. I use
11 the George Foreman grill. I just -- I'm just using
12 very little gas at all, it's just the water.

13 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: No advertising.

14 MS. BELCARIST: Okay.

15 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: No advertising. But
16 what was your bill? You said you had this bill for
17 \$85. What's your bill normally?

18 MS. BELCARIST: It runs -- I'm -- during the
19 winter months, it's like -- well, what it was before
20 the weather got cold, it was running about an average
21 of 29 or \$30. I don't usually have high utilities
22 because I'm very conservative.

23 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Okay. So around 30
24 bucks during the summer months?

25 MS. BELCARIST: Not only the summer months.

1 Prior to that.

2 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Spring, fall.

3 MS. BELCARIST: Right. Early fall, it was
4 still low. Once the temperature got cold outside,
5 then my bill went up or was elevated and I was told it
6 was because of the weather.

7 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: When did you get the
8 \$85 bill? For what months of service?

9 MS. BELCARIST: If I'm not mistaken, it was
10 October.

11 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: And was it 85 a month
12 for every month thereafter?

13 MS. BELCARIST: No. I cannot say for sure
14 that it was 85 a month, but it was not the normal
15 amount of the \$30 or 29, 32. It was in that range.
16 But it was a lot higher.

17 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Has it gone down to
18 where it was before?

19 MS. BELCARIST: I can't say. I don't have
20 the bill with me, but I don't think so. I'm -- I'm
21 in -- the last I looked at the bill, it was still --
22 it was a hundred and something dollars. I was paying
23 a little bit here and there based on the budget I had
24 myself on.

25 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Okay. Okay. I don't

1 have any other questions. Thank you.

2 JUDGE JONES: Any questions from Laclede?

3 MR. PENDERGAST: Yeah. Ma'am, do you have an
4 inside meter? Is it located on the inside of your
5 house?

6 MS. BELCARIST: I have a meter on the inside,
7 but if I'm not mistaken, a couple of years ago,
8 Laclede came by and they installed a meter on the
9 outside. I couldn't understand why they wanted to
10 come back again and put this new meter in.

11 And my sister told me, she said, boy my bill
12 doubled since I did that and if you don't have to have
13 it installed, then don't. So I need to know if I have
14 to have it installed too, because I don't want my bill
15 to double like everybody else's.

16 MR. PENDERGAST: Well, nobody wants your bill
17 to double and we'll do whatever we can to go ahead and
18 explain to your satisfaction that these AMR devices
19 work properly. I apologize because we missed
20 connections in getting that installed. We'd like to
21 go ahead and get that done so that you will have
22 accurate readings, going forward. And I'd like to sit
23 down and make sure that we address your concerns about
24 the fact that you didn't have a furnace working at the
25 time.

1 MS. BELCARIST: No. I have a working
2 furnace. I just didn't turn it on. It was set at 60,
3 the lowest setting on my thermostat.

4 MR. PENDERGAST: Fair enough. And --

5 MS. BELCARIST: Right. But I don't want the
6 meter if I don't have to get it. I mean, that's my
7 question, do I have to. I was told that I needed
8 to -- when I got that letter, I was told that I did
9 need to have an inspection. But I did not have to
10 have the meter installed at this time.

11 I don't think I want it at all.

12 MR. PENDERGAST: Well, we'll be happy to go
13 ahead and talk to you about that after the meeting is
14 over. It is our policy to try and get these installed
15 on every home that we can. We'll be happy to talk to
16 you about that. Thank you.

17 JUDGE JONES: Thank you. Any questions from
18 the staff of Office of Public Counsel?

19 MR. POSTON: No questions.

20 JUDGE JONES: Thank you, ma'am. You may step
21 down.

22 Next, we'll hear from Anthony Dillon.
23 Anthony Dillon? Geraldine Roe? It looks like Cecelia.
24 I can't read the last name, but, Dachsteiner, is that
25 your name?

1 CECELIA DACHSTEINER,
2 after first being duly sworn to tell the truth
3 testifies as follows:

4 JUDGE JONES: And will you please spell and
5 state your name for the court reporter.

6 MS. DACHSTEINER: Cecelia, C-E-C-E-L-I-A,
7 Dachsteiner, D-A-C-H-S-T-E-I-N-E-R.

8 JUDGE JONES: Thank you, ma'am. You may
9 proceed.

10 MS. DACHSTEINER: I unfortunately am a
11 customer of Laclede Gas, Ameren Electric, MSD,
12 Missouri American Water Company. I just received a
13 notice that there'll be hearings on sewer and water
14 rate increases in June, June 13th.

15 I don't know how they expect people to live
16 any more, to tell you the truth. Greed is going to
17 consume the planet soon. The CEOs are just living like
18 kings. They've taken the place of the Roman Officer
19 with their stranglehold on Europe.

20 Getting down to a more personal level, I got a
21 bill -- I always pay bills on time, in full, all of
22 them. I got a bill and it was from Laclede Gas and
23 they had tacked on a hundred -- an even hundred dollars
24 besides my regular bill. So I called to find out what
25 that was about. They said your reading device, which

1 was on the outside of my house for years. It's not the
2 new one with the satellite reading. It's the old one
3 where a meter reader used to come by and didn't have to
4 come in the house. They said it was defective and it's
5 their equipment. It was defective and they had under
6 billed me an even hundred dollars.

7 Now, that's kind of hard to believe. If it
8 was \$98.54, or something like that, maybe I could buy
9 it. But an even hundred dollars, that's pretty
10 farfetched. Anyway, they said they would -- I said,
11 well, I don't intend to pay it right now. They said
12 well, you can pay \$10 a month and in ten months, it
13 will be paid off. I said I disagree with it, but I'll
14 do it. So in the meantime, I start getting outrageous
15 estimated bills.

16 And I said, well, how are you going -- I
17 called them back and I said how are you going to know,
18 you know, if my device is defective, how are you going
19 to know what to bill me and they said we'll estimate.
20 And I said, no, you won't. I will do my own reading.
21 So they sent me cards. And every month, you're
22 supposed to read this card and mail it on the same
23 date. It's got the date on there. Eight o'clock in
24 the morning on that date that's on that card. I got
25 up, went down with my pencil, and marked the dials,

1 went right to the post office and mailed it.

2 The entire heating season, what did I get?

3 Estimated bills the entire heating season. It meant --
4 it was just an exercise in futility. I would call them
5 and get nowhere with their customer service reps.

6 I complained because my bills were outrageous.
7 In the meantime, I did get a new device, the satellite
8 reading device. Now, I understand and I've read in the
9 papers where Laclede hired people off the street and
10 you would train them for a couple of hours and this was
11 piecework so the more they could slap in, the more
12 money they'd make that day. So they didn't care what
13 they were doing. They were just slapping these things
14 in. So it's no wonder a lot of them don't work right.

15 Now, if they say they work right, I have a
16 friend, who for two months in the winter, had zero
17 usage and no bill whatsoever. They sent the bill, but
18 it said the person owed nothing. So this friend was
19 concerned about getting a huge bill and called them and
20 then they came and straightened it out.

21 So that shows you how good their devices are.
22 Everybody's new device raised their bills a tremendous
23 amount. I don't know if they set them that way. I
24 really don't think the amount of gas you use or the
25 amount of electric you use has any co-relationship to

1 what your bill is. They just bill you.

2 I think the utility companies are a bunch of
3 crooks. I think they're ripping the public off en
4 masse, unbelievably.

5 So my bills were outrageous and they still
6 are. What I did is after they installed this new
7 device that's read by the satellite, I called and asked
8 for more cards, that I would do the self-reading,
9 because I didn't trust them. They said no, they're not
10 going to use cards anymore. They're just going to bill
11 me.

12 So I decided I would make a sheet and I would
13 put six months on one side and six months on the other
14 side. Drew the four dials all the way across for each
15 month, dated it. Every month, on the 14th of the
16 month, I go down there and I draw the little dials and
17 I mark them. So at the end of the year, we're going to
18 find out what I was billed and then we're going to find
19 out what I should have been billed.

20 JUDGE JONES: Does that conclude your
21 testimony?

22 MS. DACHSTEINER: I think so.

23 JUDGE JONES: Okay. Any questions,
24 Mr. Chairman?

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: No, ma'am. I don't know

1 that I have any questions but obviously your testimony
2 does concern me about the whole concept of estimated
3 billing and certainly, everyone else who has testified
4 that they have a problem with the issue is concerning
5 to me and I certainly will do what I can to look into
6 this and see, you know, what, if anything, can be done
7 about it. And I don't know what to do about the
8 problem of rising prices.

9 MS. DACHSTEINER: Well, they say they haven't
10 had an increase in 20 years. Go back 20 years and see
11 what you were paying. I mean, our bills have gone up
12 tremendously. How can they say they haven't had an
13 increase in 20 years?

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Well, I think now
15 you're on to AmerenUE and --

16 MS. DACHSTEINER: No. All of them.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: No, ma'am. That is not
18 correct. Laclede gas was here two or three years ago
19 and had a rate increase.

20 MS. DACHSTEINER: Oh, okay.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: We approved a 1 percent rate
22 increase. American Water was somewhere in the early
23 2000s. It was before I came on the Commission in
24 2004. Ameren, to the best of my knowledge, is the
25 only one in St. Louis that can make a representation

1 that they did not have a rate increase for
2 approximately 20 years.

3 MS. DACHSTEINER: Well, their bills have gone
4 way up too.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. And ma'am, I think
6 that's -- their bigger bill has probably gone up.

7 MS. DACHSTEINER: Oh, yes.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: But let me ask you this.
9 Twenty years ago, did you have a microwave?

10 MS. DACHSTEINER: I use very little gas and
11 very little electric. No. 20 years ago, I didn't
12 have a microwave, but I use very little. I don't even
13 cook at home. I eat salads. I don't -- I'm not home
14 very much at all. I use very little gas. My -- in
15 March -- I do have more to say.

16 In March, it was warm and I always turn my
17 furnace on 60 degrees, that's the highest I make it. I
18 turn it on right -- the weekend of Thanksgiving --
19 right before Thanksgiving and I turn it off on April
20 1st. And I did this year. March was warm. So I was
21 billed \$78 and some odd cents for two warm weeks in
22 March. It was off April 1st. So my bill went from the
23 middle of March to the middle of April. The middle of
24 April, no furnace. I mean, all of April I had no
25 furnace on. For two weeks and I -- like I said, the

1 thermostat's on 60. I use very little water. I don't
2 cook there. I don't do laundry there. Nothing like
3 that. I'm gone most of the time.

4 \$78 and some odd cents for two weeks of warm
5 weather with the thermostat on 60. Also, I was going
6 to say something else too. When I was getting all
7 those estimated bills -- I'm losing my train of thought
8 here. I was getting all those estimated bills and I
9 had called them at Laclede and -- I can't think of what
10 I was going to say.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ma'am, would you like
12 someone from the commission to look into your
13 estimated billing to see --

14 MS. DACHSTEINER: I know what I was going to
15 say. I was getting all those high estimated bills, so
16 I wrote a letter to Public Service Commission,
17 Missouri Public Counsel, Better Business Bureau,
18 everybody got a copy of this letter. Better Business
19 Bureau got a hold of me and talked to me and tried to
20 mediate with Laclede. It went round and round for
21 about six months. Finally, it showed up that they had
22 overbilled me and I got a credit of \$120. It was --
23 probably should have been more like \$320 because my
24 bills were \$400 and something, 500 and something when
25 they were estimated. I've never had a bill like that

1 in my life. It was just bizarre. So I got \$120
2 credit. At least they admitted that they had messed
3 up, but not admitted enough to how much they had
4 missed up.

5 Like I said, I think we're being robbed. The
6 public's being robbed.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Do you think you're being
8 robbed at the gas pump too?

9 MS. DACHSTEINER: Oh, yes. We all are, yes.
10 At least if the gas pump is set right, you know how
11 many gallons you're getting that way. With these
12 clowns, who knows, who knows? I know years ago, I
13 used to hear stories how their meter readers would sit
14 in the taverns and just make out the bills and not
15 really even go in the houses. So I guess in the -- a
16 new version of that's going on. Maybe they're sitting
17 at a computer, just making out the bills to whatever
18 they want.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So would you rather have
20 some sort of take and pay system similar to how
21 customers purchase propane?

22 MS. DACHSTEINER: I would rather be free of
23 utility companies, period. That's the only way to be
24 free.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. But do you really

1 think that's realistic? I mean, you technically --

2 MS. DACHSTEINER: If there was technology, I
3 would go for it, believe me. Another thing I want to
4 say -- you're not going to like it, but I think this
5 is an exercise in futility. Public Service Commission
6 is strictly in the pockets of the utility companies.
7 They -- they rubber-stamp everything they want. Look
8 what they just did with AmerenUE.

9 The people -- I went to AmerenUE public
10 hearings and the people were just -- the place was
11 packed, the people were just outraged at what AmerenUE
12 did and you turn around and give them the rate increase
13 anyway.

14 Why isn't it called the Utility Service
15 Commission instead of the Public Service Commission?
16 Because you're not on our side. You're on the side of
17 the utility company. We're getting it from the utility
18 companies, the government, everybody. The middle class
19 is being wiped out. That's what's happening.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So ma'am, let me ask you
21 this question. How many people, you know, should we
22 just let majority rule? If 51 percent of the people
23 in this state decide there should not be any rate
24 increase, should that -- should that trump?

25 MS. DACHSTEINER: Are you saying only 51

1 percent were against the rate increase?

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Well --

3 MS. DACHSTEINER: It looked more like 98
4 percent were opposed to a rate increase.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. So if 98 percent of
6 the people say that we should, you know, outlaw cars,
7 should we do it?

8 MS. DACHSTEINER: That's a different --
9 you're trying to add apples and oranges, huh-uh,
10 that's different. That's not the same thing.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Well, ma'am, what is a -- so
12 if 90 percent of the people in this state or in St.
13 Louis decide we should do one thing, then should we do
14 it? That's what I'm asking.

15 MS. DACHSTEINER: We, the people. The
16 government of the people for the people and by the
17 people. What happened to that?

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Well, I'm just trying
19 to figure out here, you know, if the elected
20 representatives of one particular municipality decide
21 that, you know, we're going to condemn the City of
22 Bridgeton and build an airport, is that okay?

23 MS. DACHSTEINER: Absolutely not. The people
24 have their say. They're supposed to, but given
25 eminent domain, who knows? Uh-huh.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So let me ask you this. So
2 90 percent is good. So 90 percent of the people in
3 St. Louis should be able to do whatever they want to.

4 MS. DACHSTEINER: I didn't say that. You
5 said that, I didn't.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. So 90 percent of the
7 people shouldn't be able to do whatever they want to?

8 MS. DACHSTEINER: The people who are elected
9 by the --

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ma'am, I'm asking you a yes
11 or no question.

12 MS. DACHSTEINER: Give me your question
13 again.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Should 90 percent of the
15 people in the city of St. Louis or St. Louis County be
16 able to do whatever they want to?

17 MS. DACHSTEINER: No, their representatives
18 should do what they want them to. That's why they
19 elected them, to represent them. Not to screw them.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And do you understand that
21 doing what's right may not always be popular?

22 MS. DACHSTEINER: That's pretty rare. You're
23 getting on a different track all together now.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: But ma'am, did you look at
25 all the facts? Do you understand? I mean, all you

1 know, all you see, I mean --

2 MS. DACHSTEINER: All I know is there are
3 huge profits and the packages, the retirement packages
4 of CEOs, the huge increases they get, the bonuses, the
5 salaries, they live like kings. And people can't buy
6 medicine. It's disgusting. What's going on in this
7 world is disgusting. It's greed and it's avarice and
8 it's going to destroy the planet.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. So should --

10 MS. DACHSTEINER: That's all I have to say.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: So should we --

12 MS. DACHSTEINER: I'm not on a witness stand.

13 JUDGE JONES: Actually, you are.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Actually, you are.

15 MS. DACHSTEINER: Anybody else got any
16 questions for me? Mr. Laclede? Any questions for me?

17 JUDGE JONES: Excuse me. Right here. I
18 don't have any questions, but I realize things can
19 become hostile at times and feelings can arise, but I
20 am the judge and I will say when you can step down. I
21 will say who asks you questions. That's just a simple
22 rule to follow procedure to make sure we have a clean
23 record.

24 MS. DACHSTEINER: All right.

25 JUDGE JONES: To make sure our feelings and

1 our emotions and all thoughts are expressed, okay?

2 MS. DACHSTEINER: All right.

3 JUDGE JONES: Mr. Chairman, do you have any
4 further questions?

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: No further questions, your
6 Honor.

7 JUDGE JONES: Any questions, Commissioner
8 Murray?

9 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: No questions.

10 JUDGE JONES: Commissioner Clayton?

11 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Judge, I don't have
12 any questions. Ms. Dachsteiner, the one thing I just
13 do want to say that we do a lot of public hearings
14 throughout the state and we send a lot of staff out
15 and take testimony. We have a lot of transcripts
16 made.

17 And I just want to take exception that these
18 hearings do make a difference and it is important that
19 an opportunity be had for customers to make their
20 statements to us and that we are able to hear those
21 statements. Sometimes the decisions may be there that
22 people don't like the result and I understand that. I
23 just want to say that we make it a point, at least one
24 commissioner makes a point of being at these things and
25 they do make a difference and I appreciate you coming

1 out tonight.

2 MS. DACHSTEINER: Thank you.

3 JUDGE JONES: Any questions from Laclede?

4 MR. PENDERGAST: No questions, your Honor.

5 JUDGE JONES: Staff of the Office of Public
6 Counsel?

7 MR. POSTON: No questions.

8 JUDGE JONES: Thank you, ma'am. You may step
9 down.

10 And we have Clarence and Dana Martin signed
11 up. Will both of you-all be testifying?

12 MS. MARTIN: The bill's not in my name so I
13 don't know if he needs to come up here or not.

14 JUDGE JONES: Both of you-all step up for a
15 second.

16 DANA MARTIN,
17 after first being duly sworn to tell the truth
18 testifies as follows:

19 JUDGE JONES: And Ms. Martin, you said the
20 bill was in his name?

21 MS. MARTIN: Yes.

22 JUDGE JONES: So not in both of you-all's
23 name?

24 MS. MARTIN: No.

25 JUDGE JONES: So I take that to mean

1 Mr. Martin is the customer of Laclede and we'll take
2 testimony from him.

3 MS. MARTIN: But I did all the talking to the
4 Public Service Commission because I'm at home during
5 the day. He's at work. So he doesn't -- he's just
6 going by what I was telling him so he don't really
7 know the actual situation. He was just going --

8 JUDGE JONES: Oh, you have a specific
9 incident you want to convey?

10 MS. MARTIN: Right.

11 JUDGE JONES: Okay. You can go ahead. Will
12 you please spell and state your name for the court
13 reporter.

14 MS. MARTIN: Dana, D-A-N-A, Martin,
15 M-A-R-T-I-N.

16 JUDGE JONES: Thank you, ma'am. You may
17 proceed.

18 MS. MARTIN: Back in 2005, just as everyone
19 else, the new meter was installed and before that was
20 installed, my gas bill was like 120, 125. When they
21 installed this new meter, they went back -- Laclede
22 Gas went back a whole year and my gas bill was \$1500.
23 They told me I was using more gas than I was being
24 charged, that the old meter that was on there was
25 reading faulty.

1 Now, the meter -- that was the meter that was
2 there when I moved into the home, what made my gas bill
3 125 to 120. When they installed this new device, they
4 went back a whole year from March 2005 to 2006 and my
5 gas bill was \$1500.

6 They told me I was using more gas than I was
7 being charged so they sent one guy out to read the
8 meter and when he wrote down, I don't even really know
9 what number he wrote down because I wasn't paying
10 attention, because I really didn't know then how to
11 read the meter. But then I began to see the situation
12 on the news how they were sending these subcontractors
13 out, installing these new meters and the meters were
14 not reading properly.

15 My meter -- the first reader of the meter was
16 not moving at all. It was the last three that was on
17 the meter so I started recording the readers myself and
18 I mailed them and I sent to the Public Service
19 Commission and I told them that this meter is not
20 reading properly. And they -- they -- I sent them all
21 the numbers and stuff to them and they called Laclede
22 Gas and this went on for like four or five months and
23 they finally just took Laclede Gas' side of what the
24 meter was reading.

25 So I said, no, you-all need to send somebody

1 else out to read this meter again because it's not
2 reading properly. So they sent another guy out and the
3 guy -- this time, I paid attention to what he wrote
4 down. The meter was reading two-something. He wrote
5 down one. The first number on the meter was actually
6 reading two, he wrote down one.

7 I have a two bedroom bungalow. My gas bills
8 now is 300 and something dollars. It used to be 120 to
9 125. It has doubled, just like everybody else.

10 Laclede -- when I actually got -- I said let
11 me see the paper that the number you wrote down on the
12 paper. He showed me a one, two, something, something
13 that he wrote down. I said, sir, look at this meter
14 good. This meter is reading two, so and so, so and so.
15 I said you are lying about what this meter is reading.
16 He said, well, I've been trained to do what I am told
17 to do. This is what I've been trained to do. That's
18 what he told me and he walked out of my house.

19 And I went back to Public Service Commission
20 again. I said I need you-all, Public Service
21 Commission, to do your own investigation. I don't need
22 anyone else from Laclede Gas to come to my house and
23 read my meter because they are lying. They told me
24 they cannot send somebody else out. I want to know has
25 somebody from -- not Laclede Gas -- someone from Public

1 Service Commission has hired, someone else beside
2 Laclede Gas to come out and read my meter.

3 I don't want no more from Laclede Gas ever to
4 come back to my house because they're lying. The first
5 guy that came out -- when all the first thing -- when
6 all of this started going on with the subcontractors
7 installing these meters and everything, I saw it on the
8 news and I called Channel 5 and I asked her if she
9 could come out and send a camera to look at this meter
10 because it's not reading properly and Laclede Gas is
11 lying. She said no, I can't do that, but she gave me a
12 couple of numbers, other numbers to call.

13 Still, I was getting nowhere. Public Service
14 Commission is like it's taking Laclede Gas' word of
15 everything that they say. They're taking Laclede Gas'
16 word. They're not listening to what the people are
17 saying. They need to send their own people out to look
18 at these meters because that's where the problem is.

19 Don't listen to them -- the Public Service
20 Commission will tell you, well, tell Laclede Gas to
21 come put another meter in to see if your meter is
22 faulty. They're going to lie. They've been lying from
23 day one. They're saying that these bills are actual
24 readings. They're not actual readings. These bills
25 are estimated readings. They are lying.

1 In the summertime, the same dot or number or
2 line that the meter is on in the summertime, it's on
3 the same number in the wintertime. And those should be
4 moving. There should be a change in the way it's
5 reading. It's the same in the summer time and in the
6 winter time. They're still estimating my bill. It's
7 not actual at all.

8 I want to know if there's someone that come
9 out besides Laclede Gas. Someone else, besides them,
10 that can come out and read my meter because it's not
11 reading properly.

12 JUDGE JONES: Commissioner Chairman?

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Can somebody from the PSC
14 staff make sure that you have this lady's address, her
15 account number, all the pertinent information? And
16 we'll see if we can't get -- can one of you ladies
17 after she gets done, can you get their information?
18 And we'll see if we can't send someone from our gas
19 safety department out in the next two weeks to look at
20 your meter.

21 MS. MARTIN: Who is this going to be?

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: From the Public Service
23 Commission. From -- we'll send one of our gas safety
24 people. Would that be acceptable if we get it done
25 within the next two weeks?

1 MS. MARTIN: Yes.

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

3 JUDGE JONES: Could you remain at the podium,
4 please. Commissioner Murray?

5 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: I don't have any
6 questions.

7 JUDGE JONES: Commissioner Clayton?

8 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: I want to be clear.
9 You said that they installed -- did they change your
10 meter in 2005 or did they put in the automated --

11 MS. MARTIN: Yes. They installed a new
12 meter.

13 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: It was a new meter,
14 wasn't just an AMR or the automated meter?

15 MS. MARTIN: I don't know what kind it was,
16 but it's something new that's on there. Ever since
17 they put that new meter on there, they went back a
18 whole year. My bill was \$1500. They told me that I
19 was using less gas -- they were charging me -- wait a
20 minute what did I say? I was using --

21 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: I understand. I
22 followed you. So you got a new meter. What time of
23 year was this in 2005?

24 MS. MARTIN: This was in -- this was March of
25 2005 when I got this new meter. I moved in there in

1 March of 2004. And during those winter months, my gas
2 bill was only like 125, 130. I only have a two
3 bedroom, one floor bungalow.

4 My sister has a five bedroom, three floor and
5 her gas bill was 400 and some dollars. There's no way
6 my gas bill should be \$300-something more in the
7 wintertime.

8 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: So did you -- I'm
9 confused. Did they go back and give you a bill for
10 the prior months and said it was estimated?

11 MS. MARTIN: For the whole year. They went
12 back a whole year.

13 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: And you, they said
14 that you owed an additional \$1500?

15 MS. MARTIN: Exactly. Exactly. An
16 additional 15 --

17 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: And how did they
18 determine that extra \$1500, if there was no meter read
19 to support that?

20 MS. MARTIN: I have no idea how they --

21 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: You had that question
22 too. Was it a forward looking -- I'm confused. You
23 need to talk to our staff, give them the information
24 and relay all this information, because I'm not
25 following exactly what happened. And do you track

1 your usage, going forward right now, since then?

2 MS. MARTIN: Uh-huh.

3 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: You're seeing how much
4 you used and how much it cost and everything like
5 that?

6 MS. MARTIN: But the thing of it is, how do I
7 -- how do we tell how much we're using? All I'm doing
8 is reading what the numbers are saying. I'm not
9 really sure exactly how much we're using. How do you
10 --

11 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: It ought to be on the
12 bill. I think it's on the bill.

13 MS. MARTIN: Yeah. It's on the little box,
14 but how do they know how much you're using? Are they
15 going by what the meter is reading to determine the
16 usage --

17 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: That's the way it
18 ought to work. That's the way it ought to -- the
19 meter ought to say what your usage is. Is your meter
20 on the inside or is it on the outside?

21 MS. MARTIN: It's on the inside.

22 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: It's on the inside
23 then. How often are they reading it right now?

24 MS. MARTIN: I don't know how often they're
25 reading it.

1 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: How many times do you
2 let them in your house if it's on the inside?

3 MS. MARTIN: I only let them in that two
4 times. Those two times and I have not let them in
5 since. Because they're not being honest of what this
6 meter is reading.

7 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Now, these folks that
8 said -- that lied to you or misled you or didn't write
9 down the right information, were they Laclede folks?

10 MS. MARTIN: The first guy that came out was
11 the -- the sub. The first guy that put the meter on,
12 yeah, he was subcontractor. He just installed it, but
13 when I realized what the \$1500 bill was, I asked them
14 if they could send somebody out from Laclede to read
15 it.

16 Now, this guy told me, he told me, you need to
17 go ahead -- I don't know what he wrote, because I
18 wasn't actually reading then. I don't know what he
19 wrote down. But he looked around my house and he said,
20 well, I need to fill this piece of paper out right
21 here. And he told me -- that's when he told me that
22 these are subcontractors. He told me himself.

23 He told me these are subcontractors that's
24 coming out and putting these meters on. He told me --
25 he said, you need to stay on top of it. He said

1 because I've seen them reimburse people their money
2 back from what these subcontractors are doing. That's
3 when I called the Public Service Commission, I started
4 recording and writing it down myself.

5 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Ma'am, can I ask you a
6 question?

7 MS. MARTIN: Uh-huh.

8 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: The person that
9 installed it, the subcontractor, do you remember the
10 name of the company that installed it? Do you
11 remember getting any information on that?

12 MS. MARTIN: No. He had another guy with him
13 that he was training. It was a white guy and a black
14 guy and they --

15 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Well, that will narrow
16 it down.

17 MS. MARTIN: He brought a guy with him that
18 he was training.

19 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Okay. Well, how about
20 the guy that was lying to you? Do you remember, was
21 that a --

22 MS. MARTIN: He was Laclede Gas.

23 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: That was a Laclede
24 guy? Was that --

25 MS. MARTIN: It was actually reading two and

1 he wrote down one. I said, I need you to look at this
2 meter again, because we're both looking at this meter
3 and you just wrote down a one. Because I asked him, I
4 said, let me see what you just wrote down on that
5 paper. He had a one, something, something. I said,
6 sir, you got on glasses. Look at that meter again.
7 That meter is reading two. I said, you are lying. I
8 said I pray that God will have mercy on you. He said,
9 ma'am this is what I have been trained to do. That's
10 what he told me.

11 And I wrote his name down, but I did not bring
12 all that information down here. When I called Channel
13 5 and asked her, could you please come out and put your
14 camera on this meter, because this meter is not reading
15 properly. What's her name on Channel 5? Leusa Zigman.
16 She said, no, I can't do that, but I can give you some
17 numbers because they're firing some of the people
18 that's coming out and putting these meters on. That's
19 what she told me. She said she couldn't come out and
20 bring her camera, but she gave me some numbers to call.

21 And still nothing has been done. It's like
22 the Public Service Commission is taking Laclede Gas'
23 word for everything that they are saying.

24 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Ma'am, how many times
25 -- how many times have you called the Public Service

1 Commission?

2 MS. MARTIN: I talked to them about five or
3 six times. Five or six times.

4 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Not satisfied?

5 MS. MARTIN: No. Not at all. Her name --
6 Fran, that's her name, Fran from the Public Service
7 Commission. I asked for the supervisor. Is she here?

8 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: No, I don't believe.

9 MS. MARTIN: That's her name, Ms. Gray, the
10 supervisor.

11 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Ms. Martin, I don't
12 have any other questions. Make sure that you meet
13 with our staff, let's get this information and as the
14 chairman said, try to get some resolution to these
15 questions that you brought up here today. So thank
16 you very much.

17 MS. MARTIN: Thank you.

18 JUDGE JONES: Before you step down, are there
19 questions from Laclede?

20 MR. PENDERGAST: No questions, your Honor.

21 JUDGE JONES: Staff of the Office of Public
22 Counsel?

23 MR. POSTON: No questions.

24 JUDGE JONES: Thank you, ma'am. You may step
25 down.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Judge, what I'd like to do
2 is -- at least for, you know, we've had a couple of
3 witnesses, I don't know -- anybody that was here
4 tonight that testified that they had called the PSC if
5 there was even -- I would like the staff to respond to
6 the allegations that have been raised concerning the,
7 you know, that staff is either not being responsive.
8 Ms. Shemwell?

9 MS. SHEMWELL: Yes, sir.

10 JUDGE JONES: Will you approach the podium,
11 please. You heard the judgment of the Chairman?

12 MS. SHEMWELL: I was actually speaking
13 with --

14 JUDGE JONES: Well, apparently, tonight there
15 have been allegations that complaints have been filed
16 that have not been appropriately responded to, if at
17 all. And the Chairman would like a response to that
18 allegation.

19 MS. SHEMWELL: Yes, sir. We'll take care of
20 it. Thank you.

21 JUDGE JONES: Do you want that on the record.
22 Do you want that filed?

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes. Go ahead and have them
24 file something as part of the case.

25 MS. SHEMWELL: We will. Thank you.

1 JUDGE JONES: We've exhausted the list of
2 those who'd like to testify. Is there anyone here who
3 has not signed up who would like to testify?

4 MS. JOHNSON: I signed the list, but you
5 didn't call me.

6 JUDGE JONES: Did you step out of the room at
7 any time?

8 MS. JOHNSON: Yeah, I did, but you didn't
9 call my name. I was just standing right outside of
10 the door.

11 JUDGE JONES: Well, that's fine. You can
12 still testify. Step up to the podium.

13 LATASHA JOHNSON,
14 after first being duly sworn to tell the truth
15 testifies as follows:

16 JUDGE JONES: Please state your first and
17 last name and spell it for the court reporter.

18 MS. JOHNSON: Latasha Johnson, that's
19 spelled, L-A-T-A-S-H-A J-O-H-N-S-O-N.

20 JUDGE JONES: Thank you, Ms. Johnson, you may
21 proceed.

22 MS. JOHNSON: Like other people, I have
23 different concerns about Laclede Gas Company. My
24 first concern is the customer service. The customer
25 service is poor. They will not allow you to speak to

1 any supervisors, you know. You cannot, even if you go
2 down there in front of their face. I went down there
3 in front of their face on the 8th of this month.
4 Couldn't get no results. Couldn't speak to no
5 supervisor. I couldn't get nobody to come down out to
6 my house.

7 I have water in my water ducts. And I have
8 two children and I turned my furnace off and that's the
9 only thing that is, you know, I don't use my heat
10 because it's hot out. So I went ahead and turned my
11 water -- or my furnace off, rather. And it's just my
12 gas stove that's now working.

13 But however, there's still water in my water
14 ducts. I cannot get anybody to come down there, even
15 with two children that I have at home.

16 Now, they want to go up on gas. They want to
17 go up on, you know, all these little different things
18 or different mechanical things or whatever.

19 This gentleman stated that a person would come
20 out once every three years. That's not enough that is
21 not enough, not when you're dealing with the Internet,
22 not when you're dealing with all these gas and fumes
23 and everything else. That is not enough. That is
24 neglecting what you have out there. You have different
25 people who stay in all these Section 8 apartments. And

1 anytime something could break down and you cannot get
2 through your -- to the customer service, you charge us
3 for when it's not our fault. Water in our water ducts
4 is not our fault, and yet you charge us anyway.

5 You charge us for you-all coming out there,
6 for dealing with you-all's stuff. That's you-all's
7 responsibility. What's our responsibility is our
8 stove, refrigerator, and all that.

9 But what you-all's responsibility -- you-all
10 charge us for you-all's responsibility. And that's not
11 right. You-all are sitting here telling us you have to
12 pay for what we put out there. That's just like us
13 telling you you have to pay our electric bill and our
14 gas bill for what we use. It don't make sense. You
15 put it out there, it's you-all's responsibility to
16 maintain it. That shouldn't be our responsibility.

17 You-all are going up on different things, but
18 yet we can't even get a good customer service. We
19 cannot even get you-all to come out there to see what's
20 wrong with the product or whatever -- whatever may be
21 wrong with -- we cannot get anybody to come out there.

22 If somebody do come out there, they have an
23 attitude. If we go down to Laclede Gas, they have an
24 attitude. No matter what we do, we got an attitude and
25 you-all are going to sit here and charge us for

1 something that is yours, for something that is
2 you-all's responsibility in the first place.

3 Everybody wants to go up. The gas company
4 wants to go up, go up on this, go up on that, but
5 you're not thinking about how many people are staying
6 in these low-income apartments who don't really have
7 much, who have children, who are single moms.
8 You-all -- sometimes they turn us off in the wintertime
9 while we got kids and that's supposed to be against the
10 law, but they do it anyway.

11 So now, you're saying that you want to go up,
12 which is pointless. You're going up on something that
13 is not even half-way working. You just heard several
14 complaints about different people's stuff that is not
15 working, but yet, you still want to go up on it anyway.
16 You-all cannot even maintain the stuff that you-all
17 have already. The stuff that you-all have is faulty.

18 You can't even get anybody to come out there,
19 to even read the meter. Even when they was reading the
20 meter, there still was stuff going on out there. And
21 you say there is -- people inspect it once every three
22 years. That stuff needs to be inspected every six
23 months. When it comes to gas, that needs to be
24 inspected every six months, not every three years.
25 Especially when it's outside of an apartment building

1 and you know that follicles, like you said, follicles
2 and dust and all that other stuff can get up in there.

3 So why every three years? By then, we're
4 going to have follicles in them. So why not every six
5 months? If you want to go up on something, make sure
6 you maintain it. Why? Why?

7 I mean, you're saying -- you're not giving us
8 a better service. You're not giving us a just cause of
9 why you should go up. The only thing that you're
10 saying is we want to be able to put more equipment,
11 more sufficient equipment, but the equipment that you
12 have, you're not even maintaining. And you want us to
13 pay for something that you-all would like to put out
14 there, more to service us, which is not servicing us,
15 which has caused our bills to raise up more.

16 We can't even get our deposit back -- my gas
17 has never been turned off. But I can't even get my
18 deposit back. The 100 and something deposit, because
19 every time I go down there, they're singing and dancing
20 around my question that I asked.

21 I don't have money just like that. I'm --
22 unfortunately, I don't have money like that just to be
23 spending. I do have two children and I'm a single
24 mother that I have to take care of. And my money just
25 does not go around Laclede Gas because Laclede Gas will

1 not take the time out to come out and see what the
2 meter is.

3 I have water in my ducts, which can cause a
4 fire, but ain't nobody came out there and they just
5 want to neglect everything, but I have two children.
6 Ain't nobody came out there. Your people are always
7 saying, well, no, we can't have nobody come out there.
8 We don't have no more meter readers out there. I have
9 to ask them, if I took me a hammer and bust all the
10 meters, then will somebody come out there? How would
11 you-all get the meter read then?

12 This is a dangerous thing. Water in the water
13 ducts is a dangerous thing. But don't nobody care.
14 Don't nobody care about the -- how the kids are going
15 to get fed. Because there's not enough funding to fund
16 everybody whose gas is going up. There's just not
17 enough Federal funding. There is not enough.

18 So who cares about the kids being fed? Who
19 cares about the kids being covered? Who cares about
20 the kids' education? But you-all care about gas. You
21 all want to go up on gas, but you-all can't even
22 maintain that. What's the purpose? What's the point?

23 The people are supposed to be able to vote.
24 The people are supposed to be able to have some type of
25 say so. No, it's not supposed to go just everybody's

1 way, but if 90 percent of the people voted no for gas
2 to go up, but then you have it your way, then what is
3 the purpose of the people's vote? What's the purpose?

4 I mean, just our voices, I mean are we here
5 just for decorations or are we here just to be
6 speaking, just for our voices to be heard? I mean,
7 what is the point of us being out here if you're going
8 to dictate whether or not the rates go up anyway? If
9 90 people say it, we don't want the rates going up,
10 because Laclede is not doing their job.

11 If you came to McDonald's and you ordered a
12 number one and we told you well, that's going to take
13 about 25 minutes and you got your fries cold and you
14 got your hamburger cold and everything else cold, would
15 you want to pay for something? Would you really want
16 to pay for it? Well, I don't really believe that some
17 of you-all get it until it hits home.

18 So you're having us pay for a service that's
19 not even adequate. That is cheating, lying, being
20 deceitful. You're having us pay for a service that
21 when we leave and you-all decide -- you-all are just
22 going to decide on what you-all think and not what the
23 purpose of the people or the voices.

24 The people are what we're seeing. Our voices
25 do count for something. Had it not been for us paying

1 for the gas, the gas company would not be rich. It
2 takes the people to help out and the people is us here,
3 today, stating to you how Laclede is doing. What they
4 are doing, how it is not benefiting to have an Internet
5 service and how it's not benefiting for you-all to
6 raise this stuff up when it's you-all's responsibility
7 to maintain what you-all put out there. But you-all
8 want us to pay for something that you-all cannot
9 handle.

10 Once every three years is not enough when
11 you're dealing with gas. If you cannot even get
12 somebody to come out there for something simple like
13 water in the water ducts that you know could cause a
14 fire, then what makes you think that a person would
15 want to go up on the rates, just so you-all can have
16 your cake and eat it too?

17 That's it.

18 JUDGE JONES: Thank you. Any questions from
19 Mr. Chairman?

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ma'am, you're going to have
21 forgive my ignorance here. What is a water duct?

22 MS. JOHNSON: Water duct. It's in the vents.
23 It's water that's in the vents, I don't know how to
24 explain it, but it's in the vents and it's water
25 inside the vents so that means like when the heat

1 travels through the vents, when air travels through
2 the vents and all of that, basically the top of it is
3 what it is. And gas is not supposed to be turned on.
4 As a matter of fact, the gas man is supposed to come
5 out there and inspect it because if you have water in
6 your water ducts, they are not supposed to turn the
7 gas on because it can cause a fire.

8 So I'm staying in an apartment where it's
9 liable to cause a fire, due to Laclede not coming out
10 like I've requested. So that means if I have gone on
11 record that I called Laclede Gas Company and I told
12 them that I have water in my water ducts, I need
13 somebody to come out there and they neglected to come
14 out there and something to where my house catches on
15 fire, due to you-all's negligence, that's a lawsuit.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Thank you ma'am. And
17 we will certainly take a look at that issue. I'll see
18 if we can get somebody out there to take a look at it
19 and give you an inspection and you know, if we -- I
20 guess, if we need to shut your gas off, then --

21 MS. JOHNSON: I want somebody to come out to
22 my house every six months to make sure that
23 everything's up to par. Section 8 -- when you're
24 staying in a Section 8 house -- when you're staying in
25 a Section 8 house, a low-income house, that's like

1 saying your stuff is not equipped enough or maintained
2 enough.

3 I still have dust all over everywhere, stuff
4 just look bad, even on the outside and don't nobody
5 come -- don't no gas company come out there. I don't
6 even think I even have the new system yet. Didn't
7 nobody tell me about and nobody give me a letter,
8 didn't nobody say anything. All they been telling me
9 is we get it from the computer. That's it. It don't
10 look no different than what it did when I had the old
11 meter. It don't look no different whatsoever.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Are you aware that Section 8
13 housing is supposed to be up to a certain code?

14 MS. JOHNSON: Are you aware that just like
15 the Laclede Gas Company falsifies stuff, the landlord
16 do too and pay folks off? It is you-all's job to
17 inspect you-all's stuff. You-all put your own stuff
18 out, then it is your job to inspect it. It ain't
19 nobody else's job. So what you-all are trying to do
20 is you-all are trying to shift you-all's stuff off on
21 somebody --

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Well --

23 MS. JOHNSON: What you-all are trying to do
24 is just shift your weight off onto somebody else so
25 that somebody else will take care of it. Ain't nobody

1 else going to take care of your job. Don't nobody
2 else get paid to take care of your job. You get paid
3 to take care of your own job. You get paid to do your
4 own inspections. Don't expect for anybody else to do
5 your inspections, but you. You are supposed to
6 maintain it. Not Section 8. Not my landlord. Not
7 nobody else. It is your job or whoever works for
8 Laclede Gas Company to make sure that they inspect it.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I'm not sure that's correct,
10 ma'am. I'm not sure that that's correct. Because
11 it's your duct work, ma'am. And I don't know that
12 Laclede -- Laclede is responsible for the gas. I
13 don't know that they're responsible for your heating
14 and air conditioning system or anything else in your
15 house. So I don't know that that's correct.

16 MS. JOHNSON: You don't know that that's
17 correct?

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I don't know that that's
19 correct.

20 MS. JOHNSON: Okay.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I may be wrong. I'll have
22 to go look, but I don't know.

23 MS. JOHNSON: You don't know?
24 Mr. Commissioner, what do you know. What -- please
25 tell me what do you know? Please. I'm just eager to

1 hear this. Make this sound real good, please. Make
2 it sound real good.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Well, I know we hear from a
4 lot of people who the only -- I -- ma'am, I am
5 sympathetic and I know --

6 MS. JOHNSON: You don't sound too
7 sympathetic.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Well, it's because I get a
9 lot of people out here who don't seem to really know
10 what they're talking about, but they think they know a
11 lot more than they do.

12 MS. JOHNSON: My name is Latasha Johnson.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: All right. Ms. Johnson.

14 MS. JOHNSON: My name is not a lot of people
15 and I don't see a lot of people standing around me.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: All right. Well,
17 Ms. Johnson, back to the question. I mean, how do you
18 know that Laclede -- Laclede Gas is responsible for
19 maintaining your duct work?

20 MS. JOHNSON: I said that they're supposed to
21 come out. There has not been anybody coming out.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. So why are they
23 obligated to come out? Why are they obligated to come
24 out?

25 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Safety.

1 MS. JOHNSON: Safety. When you say you're
2 smelling gas -- let me --

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. So you're -- did you
4 call them to say I smell gas? Did you call them and
5 say I smell gas?

6 MS. JOHNSON: Do you have to smell -- you
7 don't smell gas when water is in the water ducts.
8 That's the same exact thing. When your -- when water
9 is in the water ducts, do they supposed to turn the
10 gas on? No. They're not supposed to turn the gas on.
11 So if they're not supposed to turn the gas on and you
12 tell them that there may be water in the water ducts,
13 could you please have somebody come out. But instead
14 they're saying --

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Well, ma'am, who told --
16 Ms. Johnson, who told them to turn the gas on?

17 MS. JOHNSON: It wasn't water -- it wasn't
18 water when they actually initially turned it on.
19 Before they tried to turn it on, it was water and then
20 that was fixed. Afterwards, they turned it on, then
21 there was no water in there, but now, it's getting
22 back clogged up again. So now, I need somebody to
23 come out there to see if there's water in my water
24 ducts, because I can hear water in my water -- in my
25 water ducts, in my vents.

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. So do you need your
2 gas shut off?

3 MS. JOHNSON: I need for somebody to come out
4 there and look at it. Did you not just hear the words
5 that came out of my mouth?

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. So do you want
7 someone from Laclede to come look at it and if they
8 decide that it needs to be shut off, then shut it off?

9 MS. JOHNSON: Then have them come out there.
10 But don't just ignore the situation. That's just like
11 me saying -- that's the same as that question. Do I
12 smell gas? The only differences you're putting in
13 there water ducts, you have water in your vents. It's
14 a safety hazard. Do you not understand what a safety
15 hazard is?

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Ma'am, I understand what a
17 safety hazard is but I've never --

18 MS. JOHNSON: Okay. But you --

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. But I've never been
20 aware of anyone ever calling a gas company saying I
21 smell gas and the gas company not showing up as
22 quickly as possible to go check it out. So --

23 MS. JOHNSON: But obviously, you ain't never
24 heard none of these complaints. People are standing
25 up here telling you over and over again, I mean, you

1 act like Jesus has got to come down here and beat you
2 upside the head in order for you to understand. I
3 mean, you just act like you don't have the faintest
4 common sense. How do you not understand what a safety
5 tip is? A safety tip is anything dealing with gas.
6 If it has gas in there, water and gas do not mix.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: All right.

8 MS. JOHNSON: Water and gas does not mix. It
9 does not take a scientist rockets to understand it.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: All right. And I accept
11 that -- I accept that point. I accept that point, but
12 I still -- I'm still having a hard time making a
13 connection between the gas that comes into your meter
14 and the gas, you know, the heat that actually runs
15 through your system.

16 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Do you have radiator heat,
17 honey?

18 JUDGE JONES: Pardon me.

19 MS. JOHNSON: No. I have --

20 JUDGE JONES: Whoa, whoa. Stop for a second.
21 We're not going to have a conversation between the
22 witness and the audience. So just --

23 MS. JOHNSON: I'm trying to make him
24 understand what I'm saying --

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Well, I need -- and if you

1 have radiator heat, I need you to help me understand,
2 because I'm not familiar with --

3 MS. JOHNSON: I have a furnace, okay?

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. So you have --

5 MS. JOHNSON: I have a furnace.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. You have a furnace.

7 MS. JOHNSON: Okay. I turned my furnace off.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

9 MS. JOHNSON: O-F-F, off.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

11 MS. JOHNSON: Okay?

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

13 MS. JOHNSON: Before I turned my furnace off,
14 I went down to the gas company and had explained to
15 them. They were acting like you're acting, an ass.

16 I told them I have water in my water ducts,
17 which means in my vents.

18 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: Okay.

19 MS. JOHNSON: I had explained to them that I
20 have two children.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

22 MS. JOHNSON: Kids that I birthed.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

24 MS. JOHNSON: Kids, children.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Yes. I understand that.

1 MS. JOHNSON: That I need to provide for. I
2 want to explain this to you.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. So explain it to me.

4 MS. JOHNSON: I don't want any
5 misunderstandings.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. So but you shut the
7 gas off, correct?

8 MS. JOHNSON: I shut my furnace off.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. You shut the furnace
10 off. Okay.

11 MS. JOHNSON: Oh, Lord have mercy.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

13 MS. JOHNSON: I shut my furnace off.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

15 MS. JOHNSON: My furnace. My furnace. My
16 furnace. My furnace off.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

18 MS. JOHNSON: Shut my furnace off.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

20 MS. JOHNSON: Meaning my gas stove is still
21 running.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

23 MS. JOHNSON: Because I have to feed my
24 children.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

1 MS. JOHNSON: It's just my furnace I shut
2 off.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

4 MS. JOHNSON: But there is still water in my
5 water ducts which mean if don't nobody come out there
6 in the wintertime, I'm going to have to use my heat,
7 which means when water and heat and gas do not mix
8 well. You cannot have water in your -- in your vents
9 and expect not to have a fire. This is how fire
10 starts.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

12 MS. JOHNSON: Because there's water in the
13 vents.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

15 MS. JOHNSON: There's water in the vents and
16 you have the heat on, anything can strike up and
17 there's a fire, which means I'm put in danger and my
18 children are put in danger.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Well, you knew that --

20 MS. JOHNSON: And you-all know it too.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And you shut the -- you shut
22 off the furnace.

23 MS. JOHNSON: I shut off the furnace, but
24 you-all still have not came out there. That's the
25 whole point. This is the whole point --

1 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Well -- okay. You
2 know that there are -- do you know that there is water
3 in your ducts?

4 MS. JOHNSON: Didn't I just tell you I can
5 hear the water in the ducts?

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. So whose
7 responsibility is it to go clean out the ducts and
8 your duct work?

9 MS. JOHNSON: Whose responsibility is it to
10 come out there and make sure that everything is
11 maintained? Whose responsibility is it to come out
12 there and make sure that somebody reads my meter?
13 Whose responsibility is it to make sure that the
14 meters are turned on? And whose responsibility is
15 it -- don't sit up here and start all that. Because
16 all you're doing is making a big old fool out of
17 yourself. You're taking up for them when you should
18 be saying that I will have somebody come and inspect
19 that stuff.

20 He just simply said, right here, that
21 anything -- that anything could go wrong because of the
22 follicles and stuff. You're outside. There's bugs,
23 there's dust, there's everything. So why isn't
24 somebody inspecting their stuff? It's not nobody
25 else's responsibility to inspect that stuff. If I tell

1 you that there's a hazard, you need to be getting your
2 butt out there. Not wait. If I tell you that there's
3 a gas odor, you need to be getting your butt out there
4 right then and there. Not waiting --

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: And that's our job and we
6 will.

7 MS. JOHNSON: You are not getting out there
8 as quick as possible. You-all don't do that. You all
9 wait until the last minute to get out somewhere. We
10 go down there, it's like talking to you, to a dummy,
11 who don't understand nothing. I stood up here and
12 explained things to you over and over again. I don't
13 know if you don't understand or it's that you don't
14 want to understand, or you just don't want to do it.
15 I don't know how in the world I can explain it to you
16 better. I don't know Chinese. I don't know Spanish.
17 I don't know French. All I know is English.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Well, ma'am, I apologize.
19 There are some --

20 MS. JOHNSON: Your apologies is not working.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Well, I will never
22 understand why Laclede Gas or anyone else is
23 responsible for duct work in your home.

24 MS. JOHNSON: I will tell you. Let me tell
25 you. I'm going to tell you. When you got a person

1 like you that's always constantly taking up for
2 Laclede Gas and every time, yeah, yeah, yeah, that's
3 the way it is, of course, they're going to continue
4 doing what they're doing. You're sitting up here,
5 well, well, well, this, that, that, that. But in
6 reality, all you're doing is -- that's just like
7 taking a baby and saying yeah, go ahead and kick that
8 man.

9 You're congratulating them on what they're
10 doing. They ain't never going to change and you are
11 the commissioner. You are not supposed to be sitting
12 up there, everything is on their side. Oh, yeah. I'm
13 on their side. That's what you're doing. And if you
14 was not doing that, you would not be sitting up there.
15 You would understand what I'm saying.

16 And you would not be asking all these
17 questions. I can see about the water duct, but is it
18 my job? Is it their job? Yes, it's their job. It is
19 nobody else's job to come out there and see about
20 you-all's equipment. You-all want to go up on
21 everything, but you-all are not maintaining you-all's
22 equipment is what I'm trying to get through to you.
23 When we go down there it's the same way as any other
24 business. You cannot expect for somebody to want to
25 pay for something and you got a poor business. Your

1 business sucks. You say you're out here to be fair,
2 but you-all don't give a hell about that.

3 All you care about is money. I need this, I
4 need that. Like she just told you, our bill went up to
5 \$1500 and you act like you can't understand that. That
6 other lady, who was sitting up here talking about we
7 the people, hell, you act like you couldn't understand
8 that.

9 JUDGE JONES: I'm going to interrupt you here
10 briefly. I understand that you're upset, but you're
11 going to have to refrain from using profanity.

12 MS. JOHNSON: I'm sorry, but -- okay.

13 JUDGE JONES: So just take a deep breath and
14 relax and express yourself clearly and intelligently
15 and we will move on.

16 MS. JOHNSON: I'm trying to.

17 JUDGE JONES: Commissioner Murray?

18 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: Do you have anything
19 different to tell us? You've told us the same thing
20 over and over.

21 MS. JOHNSON: He act like he don't
22 understand.

23 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: But -- okay. Do you
24 have anything different to tell us?

25 MS. JOHNSON: I mean, that is pretty much it.

1 I mean, I know --

2 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: All right. Thank you.
3 We've heard it and we appreciate your being here and
4 telling us. Thank you very much.

5 JUDGE JONES: Commissioner Clayton, do you
6 have any questions?

7 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: I have no questions.
8 Thank you for coming.

9 JUDGE JONES: Any from Laclede?

10 MR. PENDERGAST: And I just want to ask you
11 and sincerely ask you what your belief is -- I know
12 you think the gas company should come out and they
13 should inspect for water ducts. And do you think the
14 gas company should be the ones that fix that if there
15 is a problem?

16 MS. JOHNSON: I'm not saying -- I didn't say
17 fix it. I said inspect it just like inspect -- just
18 like inspect the -- the meters. I do believe that,
19 like you said, like you guys said earlier, that the
20 meter can be faulty because of all the follicles. And
21 once every three years is not enough.

22 I do believe that when you're dealing with
23 something like that, you need to inspect it every six
24 years (sic) is what I'm trying to say. As far as my
25 water ducts, it's just like saying, you know, a gas

1 odor. You know, if you have a gas odor because of your
2 stove, because the pilot light went out, you know, then
3 it would be our job to fix it. But if don't nobody
4 come out and investigate, you know what I'm saying?

5 You cannot -- some of these places you
6 cannot -- Section 8 will not do unless you have Laclede
7 Gas Company come out and say, okay. Well, this is
8 wrong with this, you know. I have to turn her gas off
9 because she has water ducts.

10 MR. PENDERGAST: Okay. So you --

11 MS. JOHNSON: Then, then, then, and only
12 then, will it not be you-all's fault because somebody
13 has came out. They have investigated the situation,
14 they have wrote a letter and they have talked to the
15 Section 8 people about turning this person's gas off
16 because again, when you're dealing with public
17 housing, you have to keep your gas on at all times,
18 otherwise, that person -- do you understand what I'm
19 saying?

20 MR. PENDERGAST: Yeah.

21 MS. JOHNSON: So therefore, it's not
22 you-all's job to fix it, but it is you-all's job to
23 come out there and inspect it and to see what's going
24 on because the gas -- like I said, gas and water and
25 heat do not -- it does turn into a fire.

1 MR. PENDERGAST: Okay. And -- and I'm just
2 curious. By the same token, do you think it would be
3 appropriate for the electric company, if people have
4 frayed wires and they have wiring problems, that can
5 also be a safety hazard.

6 MS. JOHNSON: Right.

7 MR. PENDERGAST: Do you think the electric
8 companies should inspect that inside.

9 MS. JOHNSON: Yeah. They're supposed to come
10 out and inspect it as well. I mean, we shouldn't --
11 we are obviously needing help in finances, so we
12 obviously cannot go out and afford anybody else, you
13 know what I'm saying, to inspect something, you know.
14 And I really don't feel like we should be charged for
15 when we call you-all to inspect for safety tips so
16 that, you know what I'm saying, so that we won't blow
17 up, you know. Or the house won't catch on fire or
18 anything like that. You know what I'm trying to say.

19 MR. PENDERGAST: Sure.

20 MS. JOHNSON: Things do happen because of
21 unforeseen circumstances has caused a great deal of
22 sadness and loss.

23 MR. PENDERGAST: And do you think the water
24 company should inspect the water pipes inside, should
25 inspect those as well?

1 MS. JOHNSON: Everybody should be --
2 everybody should take part in what they have. You
3 know, I don't care if it's the electric company, the
4 gas company. If we call these people, they should be
5 able to come out and inspect it. It's not nobody
6 else's job, you know what I'm saying. It's just like
7 calling the electric company to inspect the meters.
8 You know, that's not their job. That's you-all's job
9 because that's you-all's property and you have to stay
10 on that because this is Laclede Gas Company's
11 property. So therefore, you-all -- it's you-all's job
12 to inspect all the meters and it's you-all's, you
13 know.

14 MR. PENDERGAST: Right. But the meters and
15 also the duct work inside that's not owned by you,
16 it's owned by the landlord of the housing.

17 MS. JOHNSON: Right. But -- but because of
18 Section 8, you know what I'm saying, we have to call
19 you-all and let you-all know that there's water ducts
20 in there because if we don't, then we're liable
21 because we didn't notify it to somebody else. With
22 Section 8 -- when you're dealing with Section 8, when
23 you're dealing with public housing or any other
24 government agency, it's difficult. So we have to make
25 sure that we notify you-all so that -- so that way we

1 get a letter stating that you have to cut our gas off
2 until Section 8 or somebody else gets out there to fix
3 it. Because if we catch on fire -- we you know, who
4 do we report it to. Why didn't you report it. And
5 you have all those questions coming about.

6 MR. PENDERGAST: Okay. I have nothing
7 further.

8 JUDGE JONES: Any questions from Staff Office
9 of Public Counsel?

10 MR. POSTON: No questions.

11 JUDGE JONES: Thank you, Ms. Johnson, you may
12 step down.

13 Is there anyone else that would like to
14 testify?

15 KECRA MONTGOMERY,
16 after first being duly sworn to tell the truth
17 testifies as follows:

18 MS. MONTGOMERY: I don't have a testimony,
19 but I do have a question for Laclede Gas.

20 JUDGE JONES: I don't know if you were here
21 at the beginning and I know that there was someone
22 else that wanted to ask a question. We're just taking
23 testimony. If you have a question for Laclede, you
24 can talk to them afterwards.

25 MS. MONTGOMERY: Well, but I mean, but it's

1 just a little question.

2 JUDGE JONES: Well, it's a question
3 nonetheless. And it's a procedural issue. We're just
4 taking comments and testimony. We're not asking --
5 not answering questions. Unless you talk to them
6 afterwards, of course, you can ask them questions.

7 MS. MONTGOMERY: I mean -- but it may be
8 something that everybody wants to ask.

9 JUDGE JONES: Then everybody will have to
10 individually ask that same question.

11 MS. MONTGOMERY: Okay.

12 JUDGE JONES: I don't -- I have to tell you
13 like it is. Otherwise, we'll be here -- and I don't
14 want to be gray about what the rules are. The rules
15 are no questions.

16 MS. MONTGOMERY: Okay.

17 JUDGE JONES: All right. Thank you.

18 MR. PENDERGAST: I'll be happy to talk to
19 you --

20 JUDGE JONES: He'll talk to you afterwards.

21 MS. MONTGOMERY: Okay.

22 JUDGE JONES: Is there someone else who would
23 like to testify?

24 JUDY GILBERTSON,
25 after first being duly sworn to tell the truth

1 testifies as follows:

2 JUDGE JONES: Please state and spell your
3 name for the court reporter.

4 MS. GILBERTSON: Judy K. Gilbertson,
5 G-I-L-B-E-R-T-S-O-N.

6 I've lived at my residence, 9166 Ramona, for
7 about 31 years. I've seen gas men in my neighborhood
8 and trusted them. They've come and went. My dogs knew
9 them. They knew, you know, not to let my dogs out. I
10 was satisfied.

11 The past few years, though, you don't see
12 anybody. I called the gas company three times about a
13 gas leak during the cold weather. And of course, I get
14 the look. Oh, this is a dumb woman that don't know
15 what gas smells like. I got a gas stove. I work in a
16 meat department. I know what stinks. And eventually,
17 he finds my neighbor's -- my neighborhood is so old,
18 they have a grandma's house, if anybody knows what that
19 is. A little house where the grandma lived behind the
20 house. And that was leaking. And they tracked it
21 down.

22 And this lady's talking about old pipes, all
23 these old neighborhoods and we've seen how the weather
24 affects our utility companies. Everybody's running
25 around from other states, snow maps.

1 I think the utility companies are just
2 creating mistrust. I mean, what else can you say, you
3 know, when you're talking with computers. You get
4 bills out of the blue. I mean, my -- whatever you want
5 to call it -- satellite didn't -- they begged me, oh,
6 you won't have to have people coming in your house and
7 reading -- well, I'd gladly have the thing taken out of
8 my house and have the meter man back for all that it's
9 worth. \$305. I think I could afford to sit home and
10 let them in my house a couple times a year.

11 You know, I just can't see how anybody can
12 trust anybody anymore, when you're sitting at home and
13 you're figuring your bills out and all of a sudden, a
14 bill comes to your house that you're not expecting.
15 Luckily, I had the money. But what about these other
16 people that don't have it? You sure aren't going to go
17 to your relatives and beg.

18 And of course, they want you to do the old \$10
19 payment, you know. Who wants to do that either, you
20 know. You've got bills coming and going all year long,
21 much less surprises, you know.

22 And then as far as I have to say lately too
23 when I called them about my bill, his excuse was well,
24 the equipment wasn't working. Honeywell installed it.
25 You know -- oh, they also said I didn't let the man in.

1 I read my cards that I think they send me twice a year
2 or whatever.

3 And I said, well, could you give me a notice.
4 Oh, no, you've got to call for an appointment. And of
5 course you're dealing with computers. And really, I
6 really do think it has to do with communication and the
7 computers and all that. And I used to run computers so
8 I don't know. It's -- we're all getting tripped up and
9 we don't know it.

10 JUDGE JONES: Mr. Chairman any question?

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIS: No questions.

12 JUDGE JONES: Commissioner Murray?

13 COMMISSIONER MURRAY: No questions. Thank
14 you.

15 JUDGE JONES: Commissioner Clayton?

16 COMMISSIONER CLAYTON: I don't have any
17 questions, ma'am. Thank you.

18 MS. GILBERTSON: Okay.

19 JUDGE JONES: Any questions from Laclede?

20 MR. PENDERGAST: No questions.

21 JUDGE JONES: Is there anyone else that would
22 like to testify? Okay. Seeing no hands, I'm going to
23 ask Mr. Ochoa, will you step forward. Mr. Ochoa is
24 with our communications department. Apparently, there
25 was a misprint in the Post Dispatch about this hearing

1 with regard to the place. In other words, I believe
2 the Post Dispatch on Sunday -- or last Sunday, rather,
3 stated that the hearing tonight will be at the Wohl
4 Center on Kingshighway and Martin Luther King Drive
5 and I'm going to ask Mr. Ochoa, have you received a
6 call from someone over there saying --

7 MR. OCHOA: I have not received anything, no.

8 JUDGE JONES: Okay. Well, with that then and
9 seeing that no one else is here to testify, we will
10 adjourn the hearing. Thank you all for coming out.

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